

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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QUITE ALONE.

BOOK THE SECOND: WOMANHOOD.

CHAPTER XLIV. THE PILGRIMS AT RANELAGH.

I DON'T know whether they allow strangers to dine at the P. in these days. I am rather inclined to think they do not. Ultra exclusiveness tends in the long run to inhospitality, and Spaniards, through whose miserably shrivelled veins creeps the *sangre azul*, are sometimes reluctant to share their *puchero* with the best recommended stranger, fearful lest he should have less than ninety-seven quarterings on his scutcheon.

At all events, they dined outsiders at the P. twenty years since, and a very agreeable time the outsiders had of it. This may account for a certain round table in the Pilgrims' coffee-room being occupied on a certain evening in the winter of the sultan's sojourn in London, by four guests, only two of whom were free and accepted Pilgrims.

Members first, if you please. There was our old friend Lord Carlton, much older, but not much the worse for wear. He had settled down and grown fat. Need anything more be said? Well, a little, perhaps. He was married, and her ladyship modelled wax flowers beautifully, and illuminated scrolls with "Thou shalt not steal," and "The tongue is an unruly member," in gold and colours, for ragged schools, in most superb style. She was rather too serious to be the wife of a reformed rake, and was given to lamenting her destiny, and exclaiming against the ingratitude of the world, when the juvenile pickpockets whom she had converted morally to a state of grace, and physically to be foot-pages, turned out failures, and absconded with the spoons; or when the awakened returned transport, whom she had promoted to be butler, was detected handing a blue bag containing Lord Carlton's court sword (broken short off at the hilt), a church service bound in purple velvet and gold, a silver vinaigrette, and fourteen yards of Valenciennes lace, over the area railings to Mrs. Fence, of Middlesex-street, late Petticoat-lane, by condition a widow, and by predilection pursuing the vocation of receiver of stolen goods. Lord Carlton, however, went his way, and her ladyship went hers.

His lordship bought pictures that were *not* by

Titian, and, in his place in the House, was a very thorn in the side of the Royal Academicians and the Trustees of the National Gallery. He had brought in a bill to abolish whistling in the streets, and to compel costermongers to say "asparagus" instead of "grass," when they cried that delicious esculent for sale. This measure had a succès d'estime, for it absolutely got read a second time, by accident, on a very hot Goodwood Cup day; and it was only in committee, and by the advice of a right reverend prelate, who, as the rumour ran, was a distinguished amateur of sibilation, and the only bishop who could dress asparagus with oil and tarragon vinegar after the recipe of Marie Antoinette's Cardinal de Rohan, that his lordship withdrew the bill, which had fluttered the Volsceans, and dreadfully alarmed the London butcher-boys and itinerant vegetarians. A good man was my Lord Carlton, after a tempestuous youth. He owed a good deal of money, but he also gave away a good deal; and if Peter was dammed by his laches, Paul profited by his liberality. He went to sleep with commendable regularity at church, at the Opera, in the House—save when the whistling and green-stuff business was afoot—at the club, in the green-rooms of the patent theatres, in the committee-room of the Royal Hospital for Plica Polonica (that beneficent institution which we owe to the ever-to-be-lamented Dr. Quackenboss, and at whose anniversary festivals a royal duke generally takes the chair), and at the board meetings of the Elephant Life Assurance Association. Universally respected and beloved, a D.C.L., and lord-lieutenant in prospective of his county, Lord Carlton had probably little to wish for here below, save a little less gout, and a little more money to pay off his mortgages with. He had a literary turn, and had written a stinging article in a review, showing up would-be connoisseurs, who gave enormous sums for spurious Titians; and he was, just now, occupied in editing the family papers of the Carltons. As the first lord got his coronet through selling votes to Sir Robert Walpole, and the second earned a step in the peerage by selling votes to Mr. Pitt, and the third had cracked innumerable bottles with George the Fourth, much, very much was expected from the Carlton Papers.

And who was the second Pilgrim? Sir William Long. He was thinner, and paler, and looked taller, and men said his health

was failing him. His hair was slightly grizzled, he ate little and drank less; he had a cough; and he smoked even more persistently than of yore. He was unmarried. He had travelled considerably since we saw him last, and fully earned his status as a Pilgrim. He had been east, and brought home narghilés, papouches, and attar of roses; he had been west, and returned with buffalo robes and moccasins, the antlers of elks, and the tails of beavers. His hunting-lodge was hung with the scalps of the Hours he had killed; but he felt a little bored, even among the desiccated skull-caps of his slain enemies. They were dead; but what was he to do with the hours which were to come? He had become wealthier; but he spent little, so far as was known; drove, now, no four-in-hand; indulged in no elegant wickedness. The gossips whispered that the priests had got hold of him; that by his munificence had been endowed the new bishopric of Adrianopolis in partibus infidelium; that he had built the oratory of St. Gengulphus up in Northumberland; and that he would probably make an end of it as Brother Something or other, with peas in his shoes and spikes in his girdle. But you and I know what the whispers of the gossips are worth.

And the pair of guests? The Sultan Grey-faunt is before you. He was in his proper element: he was happy. The pearl of a washer-woman, and the jewel of a body-servant, had done all that was possible for him. The sultan had a contented mind, and had fully made that mind up on the important subject of himself.

The partie carrée at the round table was completed by Tom Tuttleshell. I wish to state that Tom has been dead (worthy soul!) these five years, and that his mantle has not descended upon anybody. There are a great many people going about the world who would like to be Tom Tuttleshell, *but they can't manage it*. Only one Tuttleshell can flourish in a generation, and the time of the next Tuttleshell has not come yet.

He was a florid little man, with such bright red hair and whiskers, such sparkling blue eyes, such gleaming white teeth, such a dazzling shirt collar, such mirror-like boots, and altogether in such a violent and inflammatory state of freshness, that he looked as though he had been boiled, starched, and mangled in a hurry. His hands were so ostentatiously clean, that you might have fancied (but that he was the most harmless fellow breathing) that he had been murdering somebody, and scrubbing his knuckles with a flesh-brush to get the blood off. In evening-dress he was superb, and wore the largest cleanest and stiffest white neckcloth to be seen out of a Wesleyan conference. In morning-dress his trousers were of so very large and pronounced a check as to give his legs the appearance of ambulatory draught-boards; and he wore, winter and summer, a white waistcoat, a black watch ribbon, and a white hat with a crape round it. I think that costume was the making of Tom. In it he was fit for any society. In that white waistcoat he had assisted at a ladies' committee (anti-slavery) in the gorgeous

saloons of Sennacherib House. Often you might see the white hat, and snowy vest, and the rubicund perspiring face between them, on platforms at public meetings, down the yard at Tattersall's, and in the lobbies of the Parliament House. They always let Tom into the Speaker's gallery of the Commons. I don't know why; but I conjecture in consequence of the hat and waistcoat. They looked so much as though they and their wearer had a right to go everywhere.

You met Tom Tuttleshell in all kinds of London penetralia, to the most exclusive. At the guard-mounting at St. James's you would find Tom in the centre of the hollow square, where the colours were, chatting to the dandy Guardsmen. At a review in Plumstead marshes, who was that individual in a white hat and waistcoat? Who was that bold civilian riding full split with the chief of the staff. That, by your leave, and by the chief's leave, too, who knows him, was Tom Tuttleshell. Tom was never in the commission of the peace—his commissions were of a very different nature—but you might behold him sitting on the bench, cheek by jowl with the Middlesex magistrates on licensing day. He was sure to turn up on the speech-days of the public schools, and at the collations afterwards. The swan-hopping excursions of the corporation of London; the term-feasts of the Honourable Society of Reynard's Inn (where you dined in a rusty black gown, drank hippocras, and were expected to drink, in Norman-French, to the health of the late Chief Justice Gascoigne); and especially the annual banquets of the Worshipful Company of Chain-mail Makers (nearly the last of the City companies who put five-pound notes under the plates of their guests, and cause their beadles to fill the hats of the company with macaroons and pine-apple jelly when they go away: such is the munificence of the Chain-mail Makers, whose Hall has not been rebuilt since the great fire, and whose paraphernalia is in the custody of the head waiter at the Star and Garter);—none of these festive gatherings would have been complete without the presence of Tom Tuttleshell. He sung so good a song, and told so good a story, that aldermen and baronets had been heard to regret, almost with tears in their eyes, that That Man was not something in the City, whereby he would infallibly have made his fortune. I believe that Tom *was* free of the Chain Makers, whose stock paid twenty-seven per cent, and that he lived upon his dividends. Others accounted for his means of livelihood by whispering the mysterious word "commission." It was certain that, although Tom was always ready to borrow forty thousand pounds—at seven and a half per cent, not a penny more—for the Earl of Liveloose, he never borrowed any money himself. You could not call him a sponge; for though he was continually being asked to dinner, he never asked to be asked. You had no right to brand him as a tuft-hunter, for he toadied nobody, and made himself sought by, without seeking the company of, the great. The

malevolent, only, could hint, with a sneer, that Tom's mother must be a washerwoman and his father a cab proprietor, so very white and profuse was his linen, and so very frequently was he to be seen scurrying from the West-end to the City in a Hansom. Being a very little man, he naturally carried, at all places of public entertainment, a very big opera-glass; and it was highly edifying to watch him at the opera or the theatre, on the first night of a new dancer or a new play, apparently engaged in sighting a brace of Armstrong guns linked together. You could scarcely sweep the vista of the hill at Epsom or the grand stand at Ascot, without your eye lighting on Tom and the big opera-glass, sitting in the high places, or planted, Colossus of Rhodes-like, on the top of a four-in-hand. He went behind the scenes of all the theatres; and many a manager owed his temporary rescue from ruin to Tom Tuttleshell's friendly offices in the way of letting stalls and private boxes. He was free of a great many newspaper offices, and of a great many newspapers too, to judge from the neatly-folded and banded copies which were handed to him by bowing publishers when he took his weekly trot down the Strand every Saturday afternoon. He went frequently to Paris, and consorted with the best people there, both English and French. He was a confidential creature. When Sir John Brute, who adored his wife, and was in the habit of beating her black and blue, had been unusually obstreperous, her ladyship always called in Tom Tuttleshell, and he seldom failed to induce penitence in the heart of the offending husband. He had saved Mrs. Lightfoot from committing suicide, after the discovery by her jealous spouse of Captain Tenstun's miniature in her writing-case; and when Mrs. Majolica Potts threw the tea-things at her husband's head, and he retorted by casting china images at her, and the children, terrified by the quarrels of their parents, cast themselves in wild confusion down the nursery stairs, Tom was always called in to restore peace to that distracted household. Thus, welcome everywhere, and doing harm to no man, was Tom Tuttleshell. He was not literary; but had once written a song, in aid of the funds of a fancy fair, and dedicated by permission to Mrs. Hiram Hyem Higgs (great banking family). He was not artistic; yet was supposed to have a keen eye for the old masters, had once been examined as a witness before a Fine Art committee, and was absolutely alluded to in a Fine Art debate, when the report was brought up in the Commons, as "a gentleman of well-known taste." He was no great politician; but he was sure, at election-time, to be on the Conservative candidate's committee. He was neither financial nor commercial, though he was always very anxious about the price of consols, shook his head when Venezuelan bonds were mentioned, and had been seen in Upper Thames-street attentively regarding a sample of Patna rice in the outstretched palm of an eminent wholesale grocer. "I ask you, Tom, as a fellow who

knows what's what, if that's *rice*?" the grocer was heard to say. He was undeniably respectable; but nobody knew precisely where he lived. He was supposed to have a bedroom at an hotel in Jermyn-street, and chambers in Reynard's Inn, and an office in Gideon-court, Sampson-lane, Cornhill. Yet, granting this slight amount of mystery, not a breath of suspicion rested on the fair fame of Tom Tuttleshell, for he had been seen lunching on turtle at Birch's with a governor of the Bank of England, and was currently reported to have an audience with the prime minister every morning, when the pilot who guided the ship of state was engaged in the pleasant occupation of shaving. These things become known, and do a man good.

The Pilgrims' dinner had reached that agreeable stage when men begin to trifle with the cates before them; to be critical about the wine; biscuits they nibble; to inspect contemplatively the chequers in their Madras napkins; to be deeply interested in the hinges of their nut-crackers, to peer curiously into the shells of their filberts, and when they find a withered one to utter a fat sigh, half in the complacency of processive digestion, and half as though they were reflecting: "Such is life:"—then to whisk imaginary crumbs from off their knees; then to pull their wristbands and adjust their collars; then to find more flavour in the Chambertin—"A very delicate, yet sound wine, Tuttleshell:"—"I wish I had a quarter cask of it, my lord"—than ever the wine-merchant put into it; then to admit that, after all, the old Saxon families surpass the so-called Norman race in purity of blood and antiquity of lineage. "I would rather be Cedric the Saxon than Philippe de Malvoisin," says Lord Carleton, finding two beeswings in his port instead of none: to which Tom Tuttleshell, whose grandfather was the Lord knows whom, cheerfully assents; and, finally to yawn, and to think that a mild cigar and a glass of Seltzer with something in it, would be about the summum bonum of human felicity. Don't let me hear you say that there are few hours of unmixed happiness in life, or repeat that trash, that man never is but always to be blest. Man is blest when he is asked to dine at the Pilgrims'. The chef would impale himself on his own spit if he heard that any one had been compelled to take carbonate of soda after one of his dinners; the cellar is so good that there is not a headache in the whole of it; and black care never sits behind the horseman who puts his legs in the mahogany stirrups of that friendly club. No British wife is ever angry with her husband for being bidden to dine at the Pilgrims'; precisely as no British husband (save a monster) would deny his wife a cheque if she were about to be presented at court, and lacked jewellery or lace.

"But the question is," said Lord Carleton, as they rose from table in beaming mood; "the question is, where shall we go?"

"Strangers can't play cards," remarked Sir William Long.

"Hate cards," added Lord Carleton.
 "They are stupid things at best," observed the sultan, loftily. "Give me hazard."

The baronet looked at him. "You must have oceans of money, Mr. Greyfaunt," he observed.

"Not much, but enough," Edgar replied, with something akin to a blush.

"I am glad to hear it. People call me rich; yet I daren't play at hazard."

"You played too much when you were young, Long," his lordship, who was conscious that Edgar was not very well pleased with the remark, interposed. "Greyfaunt will soon have enough of hazard. It's like rowing. When a fellow begins to know something about it, it's time for him to leave it off. But still, all this by no means helps us to settle the question, 'Where shall we go?'"

"I shall go home," Sir William Long said, wearily.

"You've no home to go to, most misanthropic bachelor, except those dreary chambers in the Albany, where you bury yourself to smoke cigars twenty times too strong for you, and read Crebillon the Younger, or Butler's Lives of the Saints. Why on earth don't you fall in love and marry?"

"I never was in love but once," the baronet made answer, gravely, "and that was with a little girl scarcely nine years old. I don't think I could marry her; for I am grey and broken, now; and she must be a young woman by this time."

"Was the attachment reciprocal?"

"I think so. I never saw her but once in my life; but I gave her some sugar-plums, and she let me kiss her at parting."

"What was her christian name — sans indiscretion?"

"Lily."

Edgar Greyfaunt pricked up his ears. "Why, I knew a little girl called Lily," he cried, "and not so long ago, either."

"Not such a very uncommon name," yawned Lord Carleton.

"My aunt adopted a poor relation," put in Thomas Tuttleshell, "whose name was Hannah; but she was a sentimental woman was my aunt, and changed the girl's name to Lily."

"A most interesting piece of family history," sneered his highness, who disliked, he scarcely knew why, the universally popular Thomas. "Have you many poor relations, Mr. Tuttleshell?"

"Plenty," answered Tom, cheerfully. "The very poorest of my poor relations has had the honour of making a fourth at a very pleasant dinner-party at the Pilgrims' Club, Park-lane, this very evening." Hereby Tom managed to kill two birds with one stone; to give Greyfaunt a Rowland for his Oliver; and to pay Lord Carleton, who was the Amphitryon, a neat little compliment. Yet the good fellow winced somewhat as he replied to the young man. He knew all about Mr. Edgar Greyfaunt. "Why should that brainless puppy insult me?" he thought. "Here's a peer of the realm and a rich baronet. They

never say anything rude to me; yet here's a stuck-up young jackanapes, who's burning the candle at both ends, and in six months won't have a penny of his old aunt's money, has never a civil word to throw at Tom Tuttleshell. Well: it don't much matter. He'll never get on." Tom never bore malice; and to prophesy that a man would never get on, was the severest censure he ever passed on the conduct of an enemy.

"The question," resumed Lord Carleton, anxious to put an end to an embarrassing discussion, "again resolves itself into, 'Where shall we go?'"

They were donning their great-coats in the hall.

"Come home and smoke with me," suggested the baronet.

"We will smoke, and not go home with thee, hermit of the passage between Piccadilly and Burlington-gardens," thus Lord Carleton. "We know how it would end. Three o'clock in the morning, a discussion on the Cosmic Principle in Nature; Greyfaunt losing his temper, and challenging us all to fight duels before breakfast; nervous affections brought on by excessive indulgence in tobacco; and Tom Tuttleshell asleep with his head in the coal-scuttle."

"Come and play lansquenet at my rooms," proposed the sultan. He knew that Tom never played, and would go away (which was the very thing he wanted) if the invitation were accepted; and he would have been delighted to entertain a peer and a baronet, even if he lost money to them.

"Long has forsworn lansquenet, and I prefer whist," objected his lordship. "Can no one propose something else?"

"Why, there are plenty of places to go to," said Thomas, who saw that his peculiar office was now in request, but who had prudently bided his time until the invention of his superiors was exhausted. You must not be obtrusive with the lion, even if you be a jackal. Wait until king Noble begins to scratch his mane with a puzzled air, and turns an inquiring eye towards you. Then you may hint to his majesty, but very discreetly, where you think the nicest antelope is to be found.

"Places to while away an hour positively abound," pursued the diplomatic Thomas. "Will you take a cab down to Pentonville, and see the Grecian? A monstrous queer place, I can assure you. I took an English duke and the Hospodar of Moldavia (who insisted on wearing a false nose, thinking there was a masquerade) there one night, and they enjoyed themselves immensely. Don't care about going so far? Will you be my guests at a humble little club in Frith-street, Soho? It is club night. Brattles will be in the chair. You know Brattles, the well-known sculptor of Satan putting on the Serpent's Skin. There will be some capital singing, and you'll meet some of the first wits of the day. I'll introduce you all as Manchester men, if Mr. Greyfaunt chooses to hide his artistic candle under a bushel."

"I should like to go very much indeed," said Sir William Long.

The Sultan Greyfaunt demurred, on the plea that they would probably be bored. The sultan would have dearly liked to strangle Tom Tuttle-shell for that ill-timed allusion to his artistic genius.

"Try again, Tom," said Lord Carleton, who was thinking what her serious ladyship would say if she even heard of the expediency of visiting these wild haunts of dissipation being mooted.

"Well, there's Evans's; but it's too early. There's a new farce at the Lyceum—Potatoes and Pool, or the Can and the Cannon Game; but I know the French piece, and the man who has done it into English; and both are stupid. What do you say to a visit to Ranelagh?"

"Ranelagh! why I haven't been there for ten years!" exclaimed Sir William.

"Ranelagh! Why it's mid-winter, and as cold as charity," said Lord Carleton.

"Where *is* Ranelagh?" asked the Sultan Greyfaunt, with engaging simplicity.

"Southwark Bridge-road, half a mile from the Asylum for Club-foot; two-shilling cab fare," rapidly pursued Thomas. "As to its being winter, that will be just the fun of it. M'Variety, the manager, who took the lease when poor Benjamin Raphael went to the bad, and who is a fellow of infinite resources, was the first man to hit on the ingenious notion of opening Ranelagh in winter. The statues in the Archipelagian walk are covered up with straw, it is true, but they're beautifully lighted. The trees are leafless, but there's no end to the additional lamps. There's an artificial skating-pond, and a Galop Infernal on skates, with a full band, at ten o'clock. The lake's boarded over, and the Panorama of Seringapatam has been turned into Moscow at the time of the French invasion. It will be set on fire punctually at eleven; and Bandenness, the great gymnast, dressed as the Emperor Napoleon, will cross from the Kremlin to the Church of St. Ivan on the tight rope, and in the midst of a shower of fireworks."

"Accomplished Tom, you speak like a book," said Lord Carleton.

"Or a play-bill," good-naturedly suggested Mr. Greyfaunt.

"You're not far wrong there," returned Thomas, with a dry laugh, "for I help M'Variety (who is an old ally of mine) every week to make out his programmes. Come, my lords and gentlemen. Shall it be Ranelagh? The price of admission has been reduced from half-a-crown to one shilling. There are a concert-room, a dancing pavilion, an exhibition of waxworks direct from Paris, and the property of the celebrated Florentine anatomical artist Signor Ventimillioni. There are the Wolocrimi family—the Bounding Brothers of the Western Prairies; there is a ballet-theatre; and finally there is a circus, where Madame Ernestine, the celebrated equestrian, is to make her first appearance this very night on her trained charger Constant, dressé à la haute école, the bills say, although

what that may be I have not the slightest notion. We shall be just in time to see her."

"Constant! that's an odd name for a horse. Poor Frank Blunt—Griffin Blunt they used to call him: he came to a sorry end in Paris the other day—used to have a man called Constant. Deuced clever fellow he was, too. Dressed hair and made curaçao punch wonderfully. Robbed his master, I dare say. No, I think Blunt must have robbed him. A shocking rip was Frank, poor fellow."

"There is a man called Constant who keeps Pomeroy's Hotel, where I stayed when I came to town," Edgar remarked, in reply to Lord Carleton. The nobleman had sent away his brougham, and the baronet his cab, which were waiting at the club door, by this time; and the distinguished quartet, ensconced in a humble four-wheeled cab, were on their way to the famous gardens of Ranelagh. "I wonder whether it's the same Constant? These valets often save money and set up hotels."

"There is a river in Macedon, and there is a river in Monmouth," observed Sir William Long, "and I can't see what your Constant or anybody's Constant has to do with the lady's horse at Ranelagh. I wonder who this Madame Ernestine is? These horse-riding women change their names so often. I know there is one of them whom I should like to find."

A QUARTETTE PARTY IN MEADOW-ROW.

THERE was very little music among the worthies of South Cove in my childish days. A few wheezy pianos vegetated here and there, dusty and untuned, in their pleasant parlours; but it was very rare, as one passed before the open windows, to hear even the feeble little tweedlings of the Downfal of Paris, or the Garland of Love, which did duty at South Cove for melody, tapped out gingerly with incoherent gaps in the time. It was very natural, therefore, that Godpapa Vance, in right of his many thick volumes of marble-covered sonatas, and his peerless violoncello, should have taken his unquestioned seat in the musical world of South Cove as the Magnus Apollo of a rather shabby Parnassus.

Now and then, as beehived him, he would give a quartette party, a select gathering—so select that generally no one besides the players was invited, except the two Miss Standiforths, maiden sisters of the Reverend Julius Standiforth the second violin, and Madame Huillier the mother of the tenor player, a worthy little French master, who had settled down upon the small teaching there was to be found in South Cove, upon which he managed sparingly to support the old lady and himself.

The important part of first violin was always taken by Mr. Daley, who was, I believe, a fellow of some college at Cambridge, and was said to be rich, and of a good Cumberland family. Mr. Daley had long lived in retirement at the Cove

for the benefit of his health, people said, though no one seemed to know the nature of his ailments, nor greatly to believe in their existence. I remember he was a large shuffling square-shouldered man, red complexioned, and with hard high-rigged features, which the spinsters of the South Cove society called "a fine Roman outline." His clothes always seemed to me very glossy and black, but wondrously roomy and shapeless; the coat sleeves in particular scarcely showing more than the ends of his dumpty freckled fingers, which, before tuning his violin, he was in the habit of twisting and straining backwards and forwards—I suppose to twist a little suppleness into them—in an ungainly fashion, which made my hands ache as I looked at him.

Mr. Daley was not without some notions of music, and might have borne his part in the quartettes creditably enough but for a besetting fancy he had that he was, owing to some hidden disease, gradually expanding in person, and that he should soon inevitably overpass the utmost dimensions of every-day humanity; for which reasons, I suppose, he providently had his coats made very large. But this persecuting mania would seize upon the poor man at the most inconvenient times and places; in the midst of a psalm at church, for instance, or an intricate minuet of Haydn, and then he would fling down his prayer-book or fiddlestick, as the case might be, and, throwing himself back with closed eyes and outspread fingers, inflate his ruddy cheeks with an "Ough! ough!" which was evidently meant to express his perilously bloated condition, but which made a rather inopportune interruption to the musical performance.

The Reverend Julius Standiforth was a fair tall weak-eyed slip of a man; kindly and inoffensive, and always absorbed in the study of seaweeds during the first years of my acquaintance with him, though he subsequently dropped the seaweeds and took to infusoria. His playing was thin and timid, like himself; the time rickety, and the tune washy and uncertain.

His two maiden sisters were excellent, hard-visaged, sturdy spinsters; curiously like each other and unlike him, with severe curled fronts, strongly-marked grey eyebrows, and figures of which the waists were very high under the arms, and the skirts very straight up and down, so that they looked like old babies in long-clothes. They adored their delicate near-sighted brother; and, besides making an idol of him, were helpful to all the poor—and the rich too, if they needed it.

Little Monsieur Huillier—we children, like most of the South Cove folks, persisted in calling him Mr. Howly, seeing that his name was hard to pronounce—played as he lived; primly, correctly, drily enough; with a somewhat nasal puritanical tone, which ran in his blood, perhaps, for his great-grand-parents had been persecuted Huguenots at La Rochelle, and he himself had something of the ascetic in his belief and practice. Still, he was by far the most reliable of the

quartette party, and the only one who managed to keep them in any measure together in the *sauve qui peut* of a fugue, or an *allegro con spirito*.

Old Madame Huillier was a well-mannered, rather taciturn body, with a bass voice, twinkling black eyes, and something of a moustache on her upper lip. Her gowns were always brown, and her gloves brown, and her full-bordered mob-caps were not tied under the chin, but tightened round the head with a broad band and bow of brown ribbon. She was a great and skilful knitter, a great compounder of cooling drinks and potions from our country simples, and altogether a good sort of woman; but the people of South Cove never thoroughly took to her, owing, I fancy, to a rumour of her having been seen, in the first days of her stay in the place, gathering snails in a hand-basket, for the purpose, it was said, of converting them into jelly.

Godpapa Vance and his beloved Amati violoncello made the fourth at the natty mahogany quartette desk. The violoncello was a beautiful instrument, rich and melodious, with what Aunt Bella used to call *brown velvet* notes in the lower part of its scale, and silvery ringing upper tones like the piping of a nightingale. But it needed a stronger and more skilful hand than godpapa's to draw out its full merits; for, despite all dear Aunt Bella's idolatrous reverence for his musical gifts, I am pretty sure they were very mediocre, and far inferior to her own. Yet the great love of her life dazzled her judgment with regard to this, as well as his other capacities. He would maunder over the strings for hours every day for a week before the quartette meeting, in the attempt to master the time of some intricate passage; and often, through the closed door of the study, I have heard his muttered counting of the bars he had to rest while he eked out the rhythm by little taps with his bow, and came in again with a grunt; as it might be, thus: "one;" tap, tap, "two;" tap, tap, "three;" tap, "twang, twa-ang!" And when, on the quartette evening, he managed somehow to shamble through his part—faintly and fecklessly I irreverently thought, like a captive father-longlegs scrambling up and down a window-pane—who so proud as Aunt Bella? I declare I have seen her plump brown cheek mantle on such occasions with the conscious love and pride of eighteen in the triumph of the beloved.

Of course, I was not admitted to the honour of making one of the listeners to the quartettes in Meadow-row till long after the date of those first baby remembrances of mine above recorded. But there was little change in the performers or the performance during all the years in which the meetings took place. Mr. Daley gradually became more and more subject to be seized, at such times, with his fits of "chronic dilation," on which account Aunt Bella sagaciously substituted anchovy toast for certain rich and indigestible dainties called ramakins, which had wont to be served hot for supper after the music; and the younger Miss Standiforth, Miss Angelica, caught a chill and died out of her quiet

nook by the fireside into a quiet green nest in the quaint old graveyard; but I remember no other alteration in the matter or manner of those quartette meetings.

Shall I ever forget the evening!—a heavy summer evening, with sultry steel-grey clouds and thunder in the air—when the Rev. Julius brought in the manuscript copy of a quartette by Spohr, a present to him from a Nuremberg doctor of music, with whom a community of infusoria-loving pursuits had made him acquainted. On this eventful evening the new quartette was to be tried over by the strength of the company, not one of whom, I fancy, had ever heard a note of the composer's intricate music before.

Tea was on the table when the Reverend Julius made his appearance at the door with a corpulent roll of music in his hand. Aunt Bella and the surviving Miss Standiforth, Miss Rosetta, were occupied in dispensing it. Madame Huillier stood at the matchless backgammon table, close to the lamp, bobbing the brown bow on her cap up and down like the crest of a Friesland hen drinking, while she was engaged in a fierce tussle with a knot in her knitting. The three dilettanti were standing near the sofa, cup in hand, discussing a question of meteorology, in which godpapa was considered a ponderous authority; and I was lounging near the window, watching the pale lightning of the approaching storm throwing out the rugged black silhouette of Stony Point.

"Good evening, Mrs. Vance. Your servant, ladies," said Mr. Standiforth, awkwardly offering the roll instead of his right hand, and then sheepishly reddening as he shifted it to the other. Then, shaking hands with the trio of gentlemen, "Here is the famous quartette," said he. "Kanzler assures me"—Kanzler was the German infusoria-hunter—"that it is one of Spohr's easiest." And then he sidled into a chair, and was supplied by his watchful sister with a steaming cup, and plenty of buttered tea-cake. Godpapa took the manuscript; unrolled the parts and began flattening them backward with both hands, but without looking at the music; for he had just been plaintively holding forth on a theme of paramount interest to him, and he could not leave it quite yet.

"My tables," said he, intent on enlightening little Monsieur Huillier, who nodded affirmatively at every pause, with his mouth full of bread-and-butter—"my meteorological tables prove beyond doubt that the variations from the mean temperature during the last six weeks exceed those of any other summer since 'ninety-seven. The chances, therefore, you see, in favour of pleurisy, catarrh, and inflammatory sore-throat"—here he gave his lips a sort of smack indicative of relish for the diseases in question—"are sixteen and seven-eighths per cent greater than in the autumn months; and so, as I was saying, temperature is everything—equable temperature—and it is not one man in fifty-eight and a quarter who—"

"I don't believe temperature has anything to do with it; at least, I'm sure not in my case," broke

in Mr. Daley. "Say I go to bed—well; that is, to all appearance well, you know; I sleep my eight hours—eight and a half, maybe; get up seemingly—well; dress and take my little light breakfast as usual; none of your heavy beef-steaks or cutlets, merely a rusk and a cup of chocolate, and a morsel of marinated fish to drive it down."

"So much poison, so much poison, my good friend!" ejaculated godpapa, solemnly.

"Well! I take up my book or my violin for an hour, when all of a sudden—down it comes upon me—presto! like a shot! I get a tingling here, and a creeping there, and I swell, and swell, and swell, till my very waistcoat-buttons fly off—or would, if I did not unfasten them; and pray, what has temperature to do with that?"

"What you have said," replied godpapa, "only proves an unpardonable degree of negligence with regard to diet; and also, no doubt, a tendency, a very well-defined tendency, to—to—the primary symptoms of—"

"Chronic dilation," murmured Mr. Daley, straightening out his fingers one after another.

"No. I forget the name. Bella! remind me to look into Carver's book to-morrow." (This was said in a parenthesis.) "I myself," said godpapa, with a sort of mournful pride in his own dilapidated condition, "have felt something of what you describe. Only yesterday, half an hour before dinner, I experienced that painful, distressing, muscular agitation—you call it dilation, but it's all one—which one feels especially in the arms and legs."

"A species of the feedgets, is it not, Monsieur le Capitaine?" quoth Madame Huillier, very gravely, in her bass voice. She had seen much of real sickness and suffering in her day, and I think was apt to pooh-pooh, as far as she dared, the valetudinarian lamentations which she so constantly heard. "Make three times the turn of your chamber, Monsieur le Capitaine," continued she, "drink a glass of water, and I answer you will cure of it."

Godpapa looked at madame over his shoulder crustily enough, while his fellow hypochondriac indulged in a furtive smile of intense satisfaction, under cover of the grimace occasioned by an extra contortion of his finger-joints. Prudent Monsieur Huillier hastily huddled up his mother's slip of the tongue, and turned the conversation, by asking Captain Vance to permit him to look at the new music.

"Oh, to be sure! Of course!" grumbled godpapa, and handed him the tenor part. With this he betook himself to a chair at the corner of the tea-table, close to the bread-and-butter dish, and there with knitted brows he coned it over, munching the while, and silently running over the fingering on the edge of the table. Then the other two gentlemen approached the tea-tray to have their cups replenished, and Aunt Bella, looking up smiling at godpapa, saw with half a glance that some untoward and ill-timed cloud had obscured her sun, though her own avocations and Miss Standiforth's talk had prevented her hearing the old Frenchwoman's

sarcastic recipe, who never drank tea, and therefore kept her place at the other side of the room.

"Captain Vance," said Aunt Bella, as he stood swinging his eye-glass moodily by its black ribbon, a sure sign of squally weather in Meadow-row—"Captain Vance, my dear. You have never told Mr. Standiforth of the *Pholex* you found the other day on the Holt rocks. He is so anxious to hear all about it, that I have been trying to describe what a rare *Pholex* it was, but you will do it so much better."

Poor dear Aunt Bella, in her anxiety to find a topic which might chase away the clouds, had transgressed her usual wise rule of never meddling with the 'ologies, and having been called upon a day or two before to admire the wonders of a specimen of the *Pholas parvus*, a small sallow shell with a bulb at one end of it, which godpapa had, with infinite labour, poked out of its hole in the rock—*Pholases* being just then his beloved hobby—she had adventured upon the scientific name for once in a way, and stumbled into a wrong termination, upon which the captain pounced down like a kite.

"Pho—las, Mrs. Vance!" cried the outraged conchologist, with an angry emphasis which made us all look up; and then he turned to Mr. Standiforth, exclaiming, "Cot, sir!"—which was with him the nearest approach to swearing—"why won't women leave Latin names alone, and stick to their cookery-books?"

Mr. Standiforth answered only by a nervous little titter; but he conjured away the storm notwithstanding, by professing so eager a desire to see the testacean prodigy, that godpapa could not in courtesy refuse to escort him into the study, while Aunt Bella, hanging her head very like a chidden child, muttered submissively to Miss Rosetta and the tea-cups:

"Dear, dear! How stupid of me to think it ended in x. And yet I know he *did* show me something that day that ended in x. What was it now? Ah! I recollect—a rose-bug—he was vexed at my calling it so, and said it was a *Cimex*. I was sure it ended in x; but, dear, dear! no wonder he was put out!"

In a few minutes the two naturalists returned; the parts were duly distributed on the stand, Mr. Daley gave his fingers a last vicious twist, preparatory to unlocking his violin-case. The precious *Amati* was lifted out of its box like a musical mummy, carefully divested of its flannel shroud, and godpapa, seating himself, bow in hand, added his quota to the hideous din of tortured shrieks and groans which the four instruments emitted in the tuning, and which Mr. Standiforth in particular always prolonged and recapitulated, to the maddening of the audience, and was invariably half a tone flatter than the others after all.

All this time the thunder-storm had been creeping higher and higher,

In dull hot scales of serpent grey,

above the rocks and bushes of the opposite hill. The rising storm-wind threw capricious dashes of rain against the glass, and in the pause

before the riot of tuning began, a deep distant growl sounded over the sea.

Madame Huillier came out of her corner as she heard it, and sat down beside Aunt Bella. A dread of thunder-storms was, I do believe, the good lady's only touch of cowardice. In all else her moustache and her bass voice were not belied by any petty weakness, though she made no boast of her courage. I have seen her hold upon her lap quietly and tenderly, but quite firmly, the poor quivering struggling limbs of a young child whose ankle-joint had just been run over, while the surgeons set the bone, and I know she has sat by the bedside of a patient dying of scarlet fever, when all save the mother held aloof for fear of infection. But the sound of a moderate thunder-clap seemed to change her whole nature, and startle her into a superstitious agitation which I can only explain by surmising, that it may have found some echo in the terrors of her hard, bitter, Calvinistic creed. Some haunting dread of the inexorable judgments and visitations of her God of Wrath was, I doubt not, at the bottom of the old Frenchwoman's overweening trepidation. If she had been a Catholic, madame would have crossed herself, and said, "*Ora pro nobis*." As she was not, she drew nearer to the other two ladies, moved her lips nervously, and lost the count of her stitches.

"Ah!" said godpapa, tapping the page with the point of his bow. "Three crotchets in a bar. *Largo*. That's well! Now, gentlemen!" And off they set, and, for a few bars, they seemed quite astounded at their own prowess. Aunt Bella ejaculated audibly that it was "vastly fine." By degrees, however, Mr. Standiforth and godpapa began to lag behind. For Mr. Standiforth stuck fast for a second or so at some double notes of which he could not compass the fingering, and then giving them up as a bad job, skipped them and went on, just a bar too late to join his fellow labourers; while godpapa charged manfully at a solo passage—Monsieur Huillier's dry, correct tenor supporting—and when he found it too intricate for his fingers, lapsed into his favourite, "one, two, twang! twang! two, three!" mumbled in an under tone; and so shambled onwards in the rear as best he could.

It was well that a rattling peal of thunder, which seemed nearly overhead, and made madame plant her elbows firmly on the table and her hands on her ears, covered the ravelled-out close of that sorely misused *largo*; of which I only remember that towards the end it broke into a playful *andante* movement, and that Mr. Standiforth, in a miz-maze, rested his violin on his knee and stared helplessly at the paper, while godpapa, who flattered himself he had caught up his companions at last, and nothing heeded the long-drawn chords which announced their arrival at the end, still continued his persistent little feeble twang! twang! all by himself, till the hoarse roar of the thunder extinguished him, not a little to the listeners' satisfaction.

There was an attempt made, I recollect, to perform the *allegro capriccioso*, with its intricate harmonics and restless changes of time at intervals of a few bars each. But, as might be supposed, the effect produced resembled no earthly combination of stringed instruments, but rather a confused Babel of squeaking, groaning, buzzing, and croaking, wherein all seemed equally lost, and godpapa distinguished himself in the daddy-longlegs movement before mentioned. Miss Rosetta was seized with a fit of opportune coughing; I plunged my face into the great china-bowl of pinks; and even dear Aunt Bella was fain to go to the window and look out at the lightning. To the relief of all present, Mr. Daley dropped his instrument with a crash, as another grand peal of thunder came rattling down the valley, and flinging himself back with closed eyes, ejaculated, "Ough! ough! Swelling—swelling every moment!" Thus ended Spohr's celebrated quartette, as performed in Meadow-row. The conscientious second violin, the gristly tip of whose nose, combined with the pink framework of his eyes, gave him, I thought, more than ever the look of the fish called a gurnet, still sat hunched up opposite to his portion of the desk, tracing with the point of his bow the black ups and downs of the demi-semiquavers, and muttering to himself, "A perfect waistcoat pattern! Diabolical stuff! What *could* that fellow Kanzler mean!"

BOUQUETS.

FEASTS, fêtes, and flowers, go well together. They naturally intertwine and amalgamate, both literally and alliterately. When our first parents entertained their angelic guest in the garden of Eden,

to the sylvan lodge
They came, that like Pomona's arbour smiled,
With flowerets decked, and fragrant smells.

Whilst Eve, after serving her dinner,

then strews the ground
With rose and odours from the shrub unfumed.

At festive seasons, when flowers are rare, we substitute for them their precursors, leaves; or their successors, fruits and berries. Our friends at the antipodes, whose Christmas falls at midsummer, gladly garnish their rooms with brilliant bouquets, although they retain a lingering fondness for our native winter decorations, composed of holly, ivy, and mistletoe.

Flowers are plants arrived at their perfect state, their climax of existence. There is one plant which is all flower, and nothing else. Many flowers have no leaves, whose office is filled by the stalk or stem. But, in truth, we habitually employ the term "flower" synecdochally, i.e. taking the part for the whole. "Fond of flowers" really means fond of flower-producing plants. A flower-market is a place where plants which furnish flowers are sold. A non-flowering plant, like a naughty schoolboy, is sent down by learned doctors to the bottom of

its class, to take its place with mould and mustinesses. It is stigmatised with the title of cryptogam, which may be interpreted "sneak," and is disowned by its nobler vegetable relations. The most delicate and wholesome of vegetables are edible and potable flowers—the curious cauliflower, cherished of Pompey the Great; the hardier broccoli; the anti-rheumatic artichoke; the caper, coupled with boiled leg of mutton; the nasturtium and borage, to crown the salad-bowl; the hop, yielding its perfume to Allsopp's ale; the cowslip, consenting to be smothered in cream; the fever-chasing camomile, and the calumative lime-blossom.

Bouquets, in their strict sense, are flowers in combination, tied in a bunch, married together for better for worse, the tall with the short, the bright with the dull, the pretty with the plain, and proving, as in other unions, if not exactly that extremes meet, certainly that contraries go well together. The word bouquet is derived from *boscetum*; but the parent stands greatly in need of a certificate of legitimacy. Our "nosegay" (pronounced by our French friends "nosey-gay") is of less disputed origin, as well as a better thing in itself; because, in order to cheer our nasal organs, it must be composed of sweet-smelling flowers. Whether they be what Lord Bacon calls "flowers fast of their smells" (as roses, damask and red), so that you may walk by a whole row of them and find nothing of their sweetness, yea though it be in a morning's dew; or whether they be "the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air—that which, above all others, yields the sweetest smell in the air, is the violet; especially the white double violet, which comes twice a year, about the middle of April, and about Bartholomew-tide"—certain it is that nosegay flowers ought to be pleasant to the nose. Whereas "bouquet" is much wider in its significance, and may be taken to mean merely and loosely a bunch. A bunch of nettles, therefore, may be called a bouquet; but you can hardly call a bunch of nettles a nosegay.

Cooks style the bunch of sweet herbs (marjoram, thyme, parsley, chervil, &c.) with which they flavour their soups and stews, a bouquet. When a gentleman's beard is uneven and irregular, being made up of bald places and tufts of hair, it is said to grow in bouquets. A bouquet, in fireworks, is a number of pieces—rockets, Roman candles, serpents, crackers, squibs—let off at once so as to form a sheaf of sparkling fire, and is mostly the conclusion of the display. Generally speaking, to reserve anything for the bouquet, is to reserve it for the end of an entertainment. Figuratively, following out the nosegay idea, the bouquet of wine is the peculiar perfume and aroma which distinguishes it from other wines. In France, it is usual to present one's friends with a nosegay on their fête-day; for this, a copy of verses is sometimes substituted, which is thence entitled a bouquet. Lastly, when horse-dealers take a nag to market, they tie a bouquet of straw to its tail or its ear. Consequently, a horse to sell is said to have or

to carry a bouquet—of which our broom, on ships for sale, is the ironical representative. And—most ungallant expression—a young lady open to an offer of marriage, is said to wear a bouquet on her ear.

The modern bouquet is a novel application of the materials composing the flowery crowns and garlands of the ancients, the use of which, saith Sir Thomas Browne, “is of no slender antiquity, and higher than I conceive you apprehend it.” Like them, they are either gestatory, such as they wore about their heads and necks; portatory, such as they carried at solemn festivals; pensile or suspensory, such as they hung about the posts of their houses; or else they are depository, such as they laid upon the graves and monuments of the dead. They are also “made up after all ways of art, compactile, sutable, pleitable, for which work there were *στεφανολογοι*, or expert persons, to contrive them after the best grace and propriety.”

Bouquets may be ranged in two great divisions, the artistical or picturesque, and the regular and formal. The first belongs to the painter's art, the second trenches on the jeweller's. It is a mosaic of petalled gems. Picturesque bouquets, again, may be subdivided into bouquets with backs—bouquets to be placed against a wall, with all their flowers and foliage facing one way; and round bouquets, to stand in the centre of a room or table, and which must show a goodly countenance in whichever direction they are beheld. These stand at the head of their class; they are works of high art; their composition requires a touch of genius. Their successful and satisfactory putting together demands an eye for symmetry of form and harmony of colour, besides architectural and engineering skill, to render the edifice firm on its basis, and secure from the dangers of unstable equilibrium.

For these large monumental bouquets an additional talent is required—namely, the administrative faculty to make the most of scanty materials. To have to fill a tall vase with a corresponding bouquet; to be short of flowers; to have to make up the deficiency with grass, corn, branches of shrubs, berries, mossy sticks, or whatever else can be grouped into a pleasing whole, and to produce a triumphant result, is no mean achievement of art and good management. There must not be too much of one colour, nor too much repetition of one form; and yet the bouquet must have graceful proportions combined with a meaning and character of its own. The proper sphere for such colossal groups is public buildings and palatial residences.

For smaller dwellings, on the other hand, a decoration of exquisite simplicity consists of bouquets entirely composed of one single species of flower, and even of one single variety of that species, when gardening resources admit of it—which is not always the case. For instance, a single, well-shaped, liberal-sized bunch of *mignonette*, or forget-me-not, or lilies of the valley, or double yellow wallflower, unpretending as they are, has its effect. It indicates singleness

of mind on the part of the person who adopts it. Other flowers which may be so employed, are jonquils, anemones (either all single or all double), and the Persian lilac, forced in the dark to whiten it. Try, again, a bouquet of tea roses only, of various sorts; or all moss roses; or of one sort of white rose only; or, as a delicacy of the highest order, of one sort of rosebuds only (of some salmon-coloured, light yellow, or pale-blush tint), rejecting the full-blown blooms, or rather reserving them for other purposes. Note that all the bouquets hitherto mentioned are intended to be kept in water, and that they reckon upon an existence of some little duration—three or four days, perhaps five or six.

For we now approach more ephemeral subjects—the ball bouquet, the bouquet to be tossed to an actress or sent to match a lady's evening dress. Such brilliant, gewgaw, toy-like bouquets are made, not for, but by the million. They are floral bubbles which rise in shoals to the surface of society, and then burst and disappear. Did you ever dissect a dead bouquet? Better than dissecting, is to fabricate one.

I am a gardener, a town gardener, and a flower gardener, with a large extent of high-rented ground under flowers only. Bouquets afford me considerable aid in paying my rent and my workmen's wages. While we are discussing the merits of rose novelties—[By the way, can you give me buds or cuttings of perpetual white roses which open well? We want such heaps of white roses for bouquets]—enters a middle-aged female, who is either a letter of furnished apartments, or Horace Walpole's Mysterious Mother.

“Your pleasure, ma'am?”

“A handsome bouquet, if you please, sir, to suit dark hair and brune complexion. I was ordered to pay for it.”

“We have none made up at present; but you shall have it in half an hour, if you will tell me where to send it.”

“I don't know exactly, sir, whether—whether I may tell you where—where it is—it is to be sent. The gentleman—”

“Very well, ma'am. Have the goodness, then, to wait while we are preparing it. Take a seat; or, if you prefer it, a walk round the garden.”

To execute the lady's confidential command, I snatch my flat open basket, and rush to the fuchsia-bed, where I gather simply a dozen different blossoms. Next, a good handful of dark inky heliotrope; then, a still larger handful of scarlet geranium; next, a good lot of fancy pelargoniums of various hues; next, a handsome bunch of *gypsophila*—little white starlike flowers, quivering at the tip of an elastic hair-like stem; and plenty of bright yellow *calceolarias*. The rose-ground gives me *one* very beautiful half opened *Gloire de Dijon*, and half a score or so of pure white *Aimée Viberts*. You observe that I take no flower-stems which carry buds. If we had to sacrifice flower-bearing stems and buds, bouquet-making would soon be at an end.

"But how will you make a bouquet with such bits of things as those?"

You shall see in half a minute. I pluck, finally, a good handful of box, such as is used for edging, and proceed to the factory shed. Did you ever examine what is called a composite flower? Take a daisy, and look at it with a strong magnifying-glass. You will see that it is made up, both border and middle, both rays and disk, of a number of little florets clustered together. Our ball bouquets are made after the same model. I have now to make one large circular flower with the separate florets in my basket.

"Good. Show me how you do it."

I first tie my bunch of box with string, and clip its top with shears, so that it resembles a circular pincushion or an artichoke bottom. It is the foundation of the structure; botanists would call it the receptacle of my composite flower. Here, I have bits of common rush, about ten or eleven inches long; there, I have bits of non-elastic iron wire, about as thick as a horse-hair, some three inches long. With a twist of wire I attach each flower to the end of a rush, giving it thus an artificial stem. You see how quickly it is done, especially when one has three or four helping hands. We will now stick the rush pins into the box pincushion—the flowers on their common receptacle. In the centre, I put my Gloire de Dijon rose, surrounding it with a circle of heliotrope; next comes a circle of Aimée Vibert; next of scarlet geranium; next of yellow calceolaria, and next of fancy pelargoniums. The whole is surrounded with a loose and hazy framework of glistening and trembling gypsophilas. The floral surface is even and convex. The shears shorten the rushes to a convenient length, and the bouquet is slipped into a funnel-shaped holder or case of card fringed with paper stamped into lace. All the scaffolding is hidden; the blossoms only meet the eye. As a finishing touch, the fuchsias are inserted round the edge, so as to droop like pendants over the lace.

"But a bouquet so built cannot last long."

Of course not. Putting it into water to preserve it would be as efficacious as putting your wooden leg into a foot-bath to cure a cold. A vapour-bath and a slight sprinkling, through the instrumentality of a tin box, or a cool wet towel, might refresh it a little. But, *que voulez-vous?* 'Tis their destiny. To-night's bouquet graces the day after to-morrow's dust-heap.

A bouquet may be something more than a nosegay; it may become an emblem, an allegory, a declaration, a message, a confession, a letter, a poem even. And permit me here to utter a word in excuse of, or apology for, emblems. Emblems are really a natural phase of thought, a favourite mode of conveying an idea. The language of flowers is a native product of the East. For instance, from time immemorial it has been acknowledged that the rose is the emblem of modest beauty, the viper of calumny, the mistletoe of parasitism, the dog of friendship. The horse is the impetuous warrior, while the frugal ass represents the laborious,

hardy, and obstinate peasant. But the whole system of nature is an unity which contains no contradictions. If we accept these striking analogies, we cannot refuse to admit others; we cannot deny that other plants and animals also offer emblematic allusions. They may thus be looked upon, in all their details, as so many mirrors of human passion. They constitute an immense museum of allegorical pictures, in which are painted the faults, the failings, or the virtues of humanity.

Floral language, to a certain extent, must depend on the significance given to colours. Unluckily, men are far from being agreed as to the latter point. The phalansterian school, Fourier's disciples, are the most precise and positive in their opinions. They hold that violet is analogous to friendship, blue to love, as suggested by blue eyes and the azure sky. A bunch of violets would, therefore, tell a lady's suitor that friendship is all he has a right to expect. Yellow is paternity or maternity; it is the yellow ray of the spectrum which causes the germ to shoot. Red figures ambition (*vide* the planet Mars); indigo, the spirit of rivalry; green, the love of change, fickleness, but also work; orange, enthusiasm; white, unity, universality; black, favouritism, the influence exerted by an individual. Certain persons have the gift of fascinating all who approach them; and black, which absorbs all the rays of the spectrum, is the reverse of white, which combines them in one.

Besides the seven primitive colours, grey, indicates poverty; brown, prudery; pink, modesty; silver-grey (semi-white), feeble love; lilac (semi-violet), feeble friendship; pale-pink, false shame, &c. But the analogical indications afforded by perfumes and colours are only superficial. As we may be deceived by a man's outside appearance, so may we be by that of a plant. To know it thoroughly, we must study it as a whole, from the leaf to the blossom, from the root to the seed. Thus, the root is the emblem of character and principle; the stem, of conduct; the leaf, of action, labour, energetic effort; the calyx, of the individual's mode of action; the petals, of the kind of pleasures enjoyed; the seed, of the wealth amassed or realised; the perfume, of the attractive influence exerted on others.

On the other hand, it may be objected that rose-colour is popularly held to be the colour of love:

O, my love is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:

while, if blue be the colour of love, there is no such thing as a blue-rose: which is a contradiction. Milton also makes Adam say:

To love, thou blam'st me not; for Love, thou say'st,
Leads up to Heaven, is both the way and guide;
Bear with me then, if lawful what I ask:
Love not the heavenly Spirits, and how their love
Express they? By looks only?
To whom the Angel, with a smile that glowed
Celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue,
Answered.

Yellow is variously interpreted. Some hold it the type of jealousy, although Shakespeare makes that painful passion a *green-eyed monster*. Yellow is the hue of jaundice, and in Europe is the mark of pestilence and crime, of plague-smitten ships, and galley-slaves. In China (besides tinging the native complexion), it is proudly worn by Brothers of the Sun, and Cousins of the Moon. The marigold represents care and sorrow, in accordance with its French name, *souci*. For some, the yellow rose is a faithless and departing lover, while the Fourierists more consistently hold it to be a new-married lady. Sea-green may not inaptly call to mind the ever-fickle and capricious waves, the mariner's toils and wanderings; but green, the colour of the Mussulman prophet, represents one of the most obstinate, impassive, and unchanging families of the human race. The green rose is a sterile monstrosity, representing nothing but abortive efforts and mistaken intentions, which come to nothing.

Every flower has a double import. First, every flower not only means, but actually *is*, love. Bouquets, therefore, universally, are tokens of love, affection, and attachment. The perfume of the flower, like the song of birds, is a hymn of love, an incense of gratitude offered to the Creator. Linnæus called the corolla the nuptial couch of flowers. Flowers without corolla have nevertheless sweet perfumes to shed—witness the vine and the mignonette. Offensive flowers, like the stapelia and the dragon arum, have their analogies in brutal and repulsive passions. Every flower whatsoever is love, coarse or refined, honourable or base, pure or ignoble.

Besides this, all plants symbolise certain notes in the gamut of human passions. The brilliant tints of the carnation and its penetrating odour represent adult love, while the paler and fainter lilac is merely cousinage and childish attachment. The vine, the emblem of friendship, is content to embalm the air without dazzling the eye; because the affection which it figures has its source in intellectual affinity, quite independent of personal charms. On the other hand, certain autumnal flowers are speaking symbols of money-getting tradesmen who make no display till they are advanced in life. They then try to outdo their rivals by the showiness, amplitude, and number of their petals. Their dress is rich and gaudy, but its bad taste betrays the upstart. The hollyhock, in spite of its brilliancy, is stiff, cold, and pharmaceutical. The balsam, for want of a stalk, will not let you take it by the hand. The dahlia, with its big gouty feet and its formal plaited and ironed frill, is the very image of a priggish, antiquated beau. These flowers, like their representatives, being destitute of natural perfume or charm, are thereby excluded from bouquets. The mute language of the box-shrub, which represents straitened neediness, is far more eloquent. Its slight odour is coarse and homely, its corolla absent, and its fruit an ironical representation of a porridge-pot turned

upside down. It figures the indigent households in which both bed and board are scanty.

Of tokens not floral, our readers will be astonished to learn (from Madame Charlotte de la Tour's *Langage des Fleurs*) that, by a sort of tacit convention, the following signals have been adopted in several English towns:

If a gentleman wish to get married, he wears a ring on his left forefinger; if he is engaged, on the second finger; if married, on the third; and if he has no mind to marry, on the little finger. When a lady is open to an offer, she wears a ring on her forefinger; when engaged, on the second finger; when married, on the third; and when she eschews matrimony, on the fourth. If a gentleman, with his left hand, offer to a lady a flower, a fan, or any other pretty trifle, it is on his part a declaration of esteem. If she take it with the left hand, it is an acceptance of his homage; but if with the right hand, a refusal.

In France, such a code of signals might seriously affect the interests of matrimonial agents. It is possible, however, that sundry young gentlemen here, who innocently sport little-finger rings, are far from having taken vows of celibacy; while the less numerous damsels who adopt the same ornament, may only require a little soft persuasion to make it move upwards on the hand, with a skip, like the knight in chess.

THE ISLAND OF ALSÉN AND THE AMIABLE PRUSSIANS.

THE contrast between the peaceful hills and valleys of North Devon—which have never been trodden by an invader since Hubba was overthrown on Northam Hill—and the unfortunate little island of the Sleswig Duchy, is all the more striking, when a yacht voyage and the sight of the ocean have alone intervened between them. More striking still to an Englishman, because Alsén might be a slice from an English county, so close in all respects is the resemblance. Sailing over Appledore Bar in the schooner yacht *Zoe*, on the 20th of April, 1864, the present eye-witnesses looked forward with warm interest to a visit to the gallant Danes; who, during two long months, had steadfastly held in check those great scourges of modern times, the armies of Austria and Prussia. For, like all the rest of the world, we had heard how these northern freemen fought against enormous odds, and faced disadvantages which might have made the boldest lose heart. How their goodness and high sense of chivalry had shone forth in treatment to the wounded and dead of their enemy. How they had been deserted by allies who were bound by honour, by treaty, and by interest, to step in between them and their despoilers. How, in spite of all, they were still resolved to show that a free race could stand its ground, even when twenty times their number of stick-driven conscripts were hurled against them, supported by a vast superiority in artillery.

The sandy Skaw, bristling with wrecks, grand

old Kronborg frowning over the Sound, and charming Copenhagen, were passed; and, on the day when the armistice was proclaimed, the yacht ran swiftly along the coasts of the pleasant Danish islands of Falster, Lolland, and Langeland, and approached the harbour of Harup Hav, on the southern shore of Alsén. A beautiful sight is such a yacht, with fore and main sails, gaff topsails, and the great square foresail all pressing her onwards, and throwing off the milky foam from her bows, the blue ensign floating from her peak, and the Danebrog from her fore-topmast head. A Danish line-of-battle ship and a frigate kept guard off Harup Hav, and their crews must have seen in the approach of that little yacht, with their own proud ensign at her fore, if not a token of that help which was due from the English government, at least a sign of the indignant sympathy of the English people. A salute of twenty-one guns, from the yacht's noisy little six-pounders, was cheerily answered by the line-of-battle ship, the Frederick the Sixth, as, with a fresh breeze, we ran under her stern, and bore up for the anchorage.

The spacious harbour of Harup Hav presented a busy scene on that first day of the suspension of hostilities. It is formed by a long neck of land, which is connected with the island of Alsén by a narrow sandy isthmus. In ordinary times we were told that it was rarely visited by even the smallest craft, and the pretty little village of thatched houses, surrounded by stately beech woods, is one of the most secluded places in Europe. War has changed all this. The harbour is crowded with steamers and transports. The pleasant meadows sloping down from the beech woods to the sea are trodden down, and occupied by cavalry and artillery waggons. Crowds of soldiers are to be seen everywhere; long new jetties run out into the harbour, with small craft laden with beer, cheese, and fish, ranged along them in tiers. Among the vessels of all shapes and sizes in the harbour, it was interesting to see the old-fashioned row gunboats, similar in all respects to those which made a gallant stand against Nelson, in the attack on Copenhagen. These gunboats, of which there are about sixty in the Danish navy, are of two sizes. The largest have thirty oars, two men to each, and a crew, therefore, of sixty men. They are armed with two heavy guns, a sixty-pounder forward, and a twenty-four-pounder aft. The others are much smaller, with one heavy gun aft. They seem well adapted for work in the Baltic, and have been employed, during the war, in rowing guard on the Sleswig coast.

The four miles of country intervening between Harup Hav and Sonderborg is in all respects like any part of England. There are fields divided by hedge-rows full of hawthorn, banks covered with primroses, extensive woods, comfortable-looking cottages by the roadside, and substantial farm buildings. The houses are generally of white brick, with thatched roofs, usually with a single story, having a long row

of windows, with pots of flowers in them. Between the road and the door a little gravel walk is lined with double daisies; and occasionally a stork may be seen in its great nest of sticks on a lee gable. Several windmills crown the hill above Sonderborg, whence the main street descends by a gentle slope to the shores of the narrow sound separating Alsén from the mainland of Sleswig.

Sonderborg is pleasantly situated. The lower part of the town is built along the shore of Alsén Sound, and flanked on the north side by a church on a steep hill, and on the south by the old slot or castle, a massive brick building close to the water. In the upper part of the town many of the houses are battered with shot and shell, and the town-hall in the centre of the main street is a picture of ruin. The gable stands out naked against the sky, and the walls are shattered and crumbling. But as we approached the water, we entered upon a scene of appalling desolation in the lower town. Not a house had escaped destruction. Shot and shell had smashed in the roofs, burst in the rooms and through the ceilings, demolished the furniture, and broken gaping holes in the outer walls. All was silence and utter ruin—such a scene as one would not wish often to see. The doomed town was abandoned, no one was in the houses. Except a soldier here and there, not a soul was to be seen. In one house there had been deers' heads and antlers ornamenting the hall, and some china vases, a pretty fire-screen, and an old carved oak table; a shell had burst in the midst, shattered this poor family's little household gods, and buried them in a cloud of plaster from the ceiling. Still worse was it to see the source of some poor man's livelihood, the carpenter's lathe and workshop, and the little stock-in-trade of draper or grocer, destroyed and desolated by the bursting of a shell. We afterwards saw a few families returning in carts to gaze once more upon their ruined homes. Old men driving, and women and children crowded behind them. In one cart there was an aged woman, quite bedridden, coming to have a last look at the house she had probably lived in from childhood, or to which she had been brought, some half century before, a happy bride, now a shapeless heap of desolation. Such sights as these filled us with indignation at the wanton cruelty of the Prussians. Here, indeed, was devil's work, instigated by rapacity, carried into execution with that extreme caution which deprives war of all its romance, and perpetrated without a single excuse which could palliate its atrocity.

To the north of Sonderborg a gentle ascent leads to the church overlooking Alsén Sound, and here the Danes have constructed a battery commanding the bridge, which is now destroyed. The sound is not three hundred yards across at this point. On the opposite shore of Sleswig, to the extreme left, are the heights of Broager, whence Sonderborg was bombarded. Opposite the town there are a few houses, and a road leads straight up from the head of the bridge to the Dybbol windmill, now in ruins. A few

fragments of the bridge are still floating in mid-channel. Here was the tête-du-pont, a simple breastwork with a few field-pieces, which, however, effectually checked the Prussians after they had stormed the Dybbol works, until the gallant little Danish remnant had retreated across the bridge. We could see the heights which were crowned by the slight Danish defences, and we saw also hundreds of Prussians at work on them with pick and shovel, in contempt of the armistice and of their own plighted word.

The "church battery" is formed along the ridge on the north side of Sonderborg, which is crowned by a church. It commands the strait, but is itself on lower ground than, and completely at the mercy of, any guns which the Prussians may plant on Dybbol heights. In each bastion, formed of earth and fascines, there are two embrasures, occupied by an eighty-pounder smooth bore about twenty years old (Christian the Eighth marked on the trunnion), and a twelve-pounder rifled field-gun. We asked an artillery officer how long he thought they would be able to hold the battery after the Prussians opened fire upon them, and he replied, "About eight hours." Like true patriots, these gallant Danes are resolved to fight to the last in defence of their country, though they know well how overpowering are the odds that are pitted against them.

Although the Prussian work at Sonderborg is bad enough, yet the same signs of their shameful cruelty are to be seen all along the shores of Alsen Sound for a distance of six miles, from Sonderborg to Ronnehaven. A drive to the latter place is really like a drive in one of the richest English counties in lovely spring weather. There are hedges full of May, with tall trees rising out of them, the same flowers by the roadside, corn-fields, and bright green beech woods. As we drove along, there were occasional pretty glimpses of the narrow sound, and the land of Sleswig beyond. Then a gable would come in sight, and just as we expected to see a prosperous looking farm-house, with its haystacks and outbuildings, a scene of horrible desolation would burst upon us. The house gutted, the walls smashed, outbuildings burnt, and naked gables standing out against the sky. Most of the farms we passed in the neighbourhood of Kjar were in this state; but destruction on the largest scale had fallen on the once rich and prosperous farm of Mr. Rosen, at Ronnehaven. It stands on a hill overlooking Alsen Sound, and consists of a large house of white bricks on granite foundations, with very extensive farm buildings round two court-yards in the rear. The machinery and all the arrangements had been in the most improved modern style of high farming. Behind the farm buildings a kitchen garden stretches away to the skirts of a wood of beech and alder trees, and in front of the house a large pond was once full of ducks and geese. The surrounding corn-fields and pastures completed the picture—a scene of prosperous intelligent wealth in the midst of a lovely rural landscape. Such was

Rosen's farm in 1863. Now it is a mass of crumbling ruins: no sound is heard, no living thing is seen. The Prussians poured in a storm of shell with wanton barbarity, day after day, until the whole place was reduced to ashes. Not a shed, not even a dunghill had escaped. A dead lamb was lying amidst a heap of burnt straw, with a fragment of shell in its side. Pieces of the death-dealing iron were lying about in all directions, both in the buildings and in the surrounding fields. We examined many of these fragments, and also a whole shell which had failed to burst, and we were surprised to find that, in spite of all the talk about their artillery, these Prussians are clumsy and inefficient, even in their own devil's work. The shells are conical, and bound round with hoops of iron, apparently intended to keep the outer coating of lead in its place, for they do not even know how to attach lead to the iron chemically; and of course it peels off after leaving the gun and before the shell bursts, necessarily causing considerable deflection. We saw this in the case of the shell which had not burst. The lead was stripped off in long strips half way down the side, and projected from the surface of the shell. Thus they do not effect their ravaging work by the precision with which a few shells are thrown, but by pouring great numbers in one direction during several days, until at last the defenceless homestead is burnt, or the desired number of women and little children are torn to pieces. It is a slight consolation to reflect that their ghastly and clumsy work costs them about thirty shillings for each shell that is fired.

A couple of fields below Rosen's farm the Danes threw up a battery to command the passage of the sound, at a point where the Prussians collected several hundred boats in which to effect a crossing. The Prussians have batteries all along the sound, and a large one at Schnabek, on the extreme northern end. The coast of Sleswig is here well wooded and very pretty. Immediately opposite the Danish battery there is a handsome country-house, with grassy lawn and gravel walks, belonging to Count Raventlow, a traitor. The place is called Sandberg, and here the Prussian flotilla has been collected, the boats having been brought by rail from all parts of Holstein and Southern Sleswig.

In the rear of Ronnehaven, and close to the shores of Augustenborg-fjord, is the palace of the banished duke, now converted into a hospital for the wounded. The Prussians opened fire upon it on two occasions during the siege of Dybbol, but it was fortunately out of range. The palace itself is a huge barrack-like pile, but behind it most beautiful beech woods slope down to the shores of the fiord. These woods were in the brightest spring verdure, the young leaves in their richest green, and the rays of the sun struck through them here and there in the long vistas. The ground was carpeted with violets and primroses, and in places there were small thickets of alder. The Augustenburg family forfeited this charming place—for which,

however, they received three hundred thousand pounds in compensation—by their selfish treason in 1848. Had the duke then remained true to his country, he would now have been King of Denmark, and undisputed heir to the duchies.

The Danish force in the island of Alsen, at the time of our visit, numbered about nine thousand men, under the command of that General Steinmann who behaved so nobly in the battle of Oversee, where he was wounded.

Never did troops behave better than the defenders of Dybbol. True patriots and gallant soldiers, they cheerfully marched into that deadly fire without flinching, day after day; a position where they could make no return to the enemy's storm of shells, but merely stand up to die for their country. It is impossible to conceive a more trying service, and their glorious defence of Dybbol entitles them to take rank among the first soldiers in the world. Nor are their other qualities, which complete the character of a patriot soldier, less admirable than their gallantry in the field. The Prussian prisoners and wounded have been treated with extreme kindness and courtesy, while each dead enemy has received a separate wooden coffin, and not an article has ever been taken from them. This exceptional conduct on the part of the Danes, which could hardly be expected from English, and certainly not from French soldiers, makes the brutality and wanton cruelty of the Prussians—officers being even worse than privates—all the more revolting. During the whole time that the Danish forces have been in Alsen, not a single case of theft: not an excess of any kind, has occurred. Always on the best and kindest terms with the country people upon whom they are billeted, they present a contrast to almost any other troops in the world. With them cheerfulness and generous feeling towards the enemy is combined with indomitable courage and unequalled fortitude. Unsupplied with bands, the regiments sing national songs as they march, and no village on the road has any other feeling for the brave fellows but sympathy and kindness.

The achievements of the iron-clad Rolf Krake, which has three times been engaged against land forts, are interesting as the first example of a turret ship (constructed on the principle invented by Captain Cowper Coles, R.N.) having been in action. We passed her at sea on her way from Alsen to refit, and afterwards visited her in dry dock at Copenhagen, when her decks were crowded with admiring visitors. The Rolf Krake has two revolving turrets containing her guns, iron-plated on the sides, but with open iron gratings on the top, so as to admit of ample ventilation. The deck consists of three-quarters of an inch iron, with wood overall. The bulwarks were shot to pieces, the deck torn up in several places, the mizen topmast and bowsprit shot away, and the funnel riddled through and through. One shell had gone right through the deck, close to the gun-room door, and it was this shell, from one of the forts on the Broager heights, which killed

the first lieutenant and wounded several men. But the turrets had stood well; they had been struck three or four times, and the missiles had only made very slight indentations in the iron; the men, however, were exposed to a galling fire of rifles down the open gratings on their tops. We understood that this evident defect was to be remedied, and that during the refit the turrets were to receive a covering similar to those on the turrets of the Royal Sovereign. The gallant crew of the Rolf Krake had done their work right well, and the worthy people of Copenhagen have good reason to be proud of them. The ships which had just gained a victory over the Austrians, the Neils Juel, Jylland, and Heindal, were also lying off Copenhagen at the time of our second visit, together with the rest of the Danish fleet. On the sea, at least, this little kingdom is still a match for the overgrown despotisms that would crush her. The blood of the Vikings still stirs in the veins of her sons, and enables them to retain a superiority on an element where their blundering enemies never feel at home.

We left Denmark more strongly impressed than ever with admiration for that brave little nation. The qualities of the Danes, we firmly believe, bring them as near perfection as any community has yet attained to in this world. Speaking of them collectively, they are truthful, honest, and kind-hearted. The latter quality is more particularly observable in their invariable tenderness to animals: birds are tamer in Denmark than in any other part of the world. Of their bravery, let Dybbol speak; while intellectually, whether in arts, in scholarship, or in science, few people with so small a population have been more distinguished. Tycho Brahe, Oehlenschläger, Erasmus Rask, Thorwaldsen, Westergaard, Worsaae, Thomsen, Andersen, are names which crowd to the memory as those of Danish worthies who have given their country a proud name in the annals of civilisation. And, besides and above this excellence in literature and art, it should never be forgotten that the Danes are a free people politically, as free as the English, and that it is on this account that they have excited the hostility of the stupid tyrants of Germany.

ELEVEN HUNDRED POUNDS.

"My dears," I said to the three children I had nursed and reared for upwards of fifteen years, till the eldest was a grown-up young lady of eighteen—"my dears, mother is getting a poor weakly old body, and there's no one to mind her and the shop at home, and I am afraid I shall have to leave you. It would break my heart to go, if our house wasn't in the same street, and I can see you every day. But I can never say good-by to you and the master, so I'll run away early some morning."

Of course I waited till they could hire a new servant, a long lanky girl that moved slowly about the house, and took no interest in any-

thing; and even then, though I was badly wanted at home, I could hardly find it in my heart to tear myself away from the children and the old master, who was getting infirm and weakly, like mother; for he was in years when he married, being a minister on a middling sort of a salary, and he had made up his mind not to venture upon the expenses of a family till he had saved one thousand pounds clear, so that he was upwards of forty before he had gathered all that sum together, and invested it somewhere in a way that brought him in nearly fifty pounds a year. Mrs. Ambery, poor dear, had been waiting for him ever since she was a girl of twenty, and he only five years older; waiting all that weary time, with an ache and pain at her heart, as her girlhood passed by and the prime of her years faded, till her hair began to grow grey, and all across her forehead were fine little wrinkles that could be seen plainly enough by daylight. On her wedding-day, when the sun shone as brightly as if she was only twenty again, you could have counted the lines one by one as soon as she lifted up her white veil to sign her name in the register. She used to tell me often how different her wedding-day was to what she had fancied it would be when she was a girl, and all her married life as well, she would say sometimes, with a sigh. Not that they were not happy, the minister and his wife, but they had waited so long that they had grown into grave, elderly, sobered people; and when the children came, though they were only three little girls, it made a terrible upset in their quiet lives. They were as fond of them as could be; but Mr. Ambery had his own old bachelor ways, and the poor dear mistress liked to have her regular hours for reading and meditation, and minding all sorts of good things, which the young creatures could not be expected to understand, though Rebecca, the eldest, was the gravest child I ever saw at three years old, when I went to be nurse to her and Katie. That child danced once for a few seconds when I was trimming her Sunday bonnet with some sky-blue ribbon that a lady of the congregation gave me for the purpose; but I never saw her so light again, though I'm sure nobody blamed the little thing for it: only she had the tenderest conscience for a child I ever knew, and Mrs. Ambery taught her all Watts's Divine Songs for children. At times I thought to myself that the thousand pounds, though it was a large sum of money, had cost the minister and his wife a good deal more than it was worth, and I fancy Mrs. Ambery thought so likewise; for one day when she came into the nursery whilst the two youngest children were having a fine game of romp with me, she passed her thin hand across her wrinkled forehead, and over her dim eyes, and she said, "Mary, I'd give a thousand pounds to have a game like that, but I've no spirits left. I should have made a better mother if I had been married years ago. Don't you put it off too long."

Well, poor dear Mrs. Ambery was taken away from her husband and children when Rebecca

was just eight years old. The little children sat in the pew with their father on the Sunday night when the pastor from another church preached Mrs. Ambery's funeral sermon, and everybody wept, and said it was a very affecting occasion. There was the grave child Rebecca, and pretty Katie, just turned six, and little delicate Nellie, not quite four; while Mr. Ambery, who had never looked a young man, seemed stricken fully ten years older by the death of his Catherine, who had waited for him to save up his one thousand pounds, until her strength and spirits were quite worn out.

If the children had been old enough to be company for him, the master might have borne up better; but as it was, he began to mope in an absent kind of way, as if he had lost something, and could not recollect what it was. The congregation said his sermons were not as good as they used to be; and, after they had given him six months to recover himself in, they sent a deputation to reason with him about resignation and Providence. The servant of one of the deputation told me that my master answered nothing, but bowed his face down upon his hands, and wept speechlessly, till no one of them had dry eyes himself. After that, they called a meeting, and collected fifty pounds to send him a tour on the Continent, which he went, sadly and alone, writing home to the children letters full of their poor dead mother, till I could not read them to the little creatures for my own crying.

Over two years after the master had been wandering all by himself about the Continent which did him very little good, he called me into his study one night after the children were gone to bed. I was in a tremble, for I always had that opinion of men, that if any one of them could have an angel to be his wife, and she died, he would be drawn in to marry any designing woman who set her mind upon it, and I had reason to know that there were three or four persons in the congregation, widows or old maids, who were ready enough to take Mrs. Ambery's place, and become step-mother to my darlings. I was prepared to speak up against it with all my might; but I went into my master's study meekly, and stood quiet, not showing how I trembled, just inside the door.

"Mary," said Mr. Ambery, who was sitting by the fire, stooping badly, as he had done ever since she died, and shaking his poor white head every now and then, as if everything in this world was good for nothing—"Mary, come forward and sit down by the fire. I want to speak with you."

The tremble was worse then; but I made shift to cross the room and sit down as he bade me, and as I looked into his face, which was greatly troubled, I saw the tears standing in his eyes. He seemed like a man in that weakly, undecided frame of mind, that wanted somebody to settle it up for him, and I was quite ready to do it if the burden upon it had anything to do with marrying again.

"Mary," he said, wiping his eyes, "I've been pastor of this church ever since I was eight-and-twenty years of age, and from time to time my income has been raised from one to two hundred pounds a year. It has been a little hard upon the members, perhaps, to raise the latter sum, for they are not rich people, and our dependence has been upon the pew-rents. But for the last two years—since *that* time, Mary—the congregation has been dwindling away before my eyes. God knows I have done my best, though His hand is heavy upon me. But it is hinted to me quietly, not officially, that my people wish me to give place to a younger and more energetic man. They would give me a pension of forty pounds a year, and obtain for me the further sum of thirty pounds from a fund for aged and disabled ministers, upon which income they want me to retire."

"I wouldn't do it, sir," I answered, warmly; "they cannot turn you out, and seventy pounds a year would never keep you and the three children respectably."

"Nay," said the minister, his pale face flushing red, as if the fire scorched it, though there was nothing but embers in the grate, "it has been known for a Christian congregation to starve out their pastor by cutting off his supplies. I dare not refuse; my spirit is broken, and shrinks from conflict. Moreover, Mary, I am not solely dependent upon my ministerial income. I have private property which brings me in nearly fifty pounds a year."

"Three and four," I said, counting upon my fingers, "are seven, and five makes twelve, and a nought after twelve comes to one hundred and twenty. We could manage with one hundred and twenty pounds a year, sir."

"We were right, then," he said, with a glow of pleasure; "Catherine and I did not deny ourselves in vain. Our little ones will be provided for."

I thought the little ones might have been big ones by this time, and able to provide for themselves; but I said nothing to damp his spirits. However, in the course of a few months we retired upon a pension, and as our income was a good deal lessened, I gave the other servant notice, and we settled down in a small but well-looking house, a little back from the street, in as respectable a part of the town as one could desire, with the little shop of confectionery, which my mother kept herself by, not more than a stone's throw off.

Rebecca was quite a pattern of a child, the very picture of her poor dead mother, with fine little lines upon her forehead before she was twelve years old, and a careful look in her face as if she was saving up the very fun and mirth a child ought to have. Never was any young creature so strait-handed and sparing; even while she was small enough to have a doll, she stinted and contrived for it, like a full-grown mother. But withal she was conscientious, and I used often to think, as we sat in one of the back pews of the chapel, and watched her all through the service as serious and attentive as a grown-up

woman, what a lucky thing it was for her that we were too poor and humble to be taken much notice of, or she would have been encouraged to be too pious for a child, and maybe grow up into a hypocrite. But there was no danger of all that with the other two, Katie and Nellie; they were merry little romps, like other children, and a very sore exercise of spirit were they often and often to Rebecca.

At last I was obliged to run away from them. I could not wait upon the customers all that day, because my face was red and swollen with crying. It was a long time before I could reconcile myself to living in another house; but after all, it was a good thing for the children. Miss Rebecca, as was quite natural at her age, took the management of the house, and beat me hollow in making things go a long way. It was a hard life for a young girl never to know the pleasure of wasting a shilling; for it is pleasant to have money to spend without counting the pence, but Rebecca reckoned up every farthing; and if Katie and Nellie had any pocket-money, it was only like some clergyman's daughters that Katie laughingly told me about, who had a sovereign apiece on condition that they neither changed it nor spent it.

It is not quite becoming in me to tell it; but though I am a single woman, forty years of age, I have had no less than ten offers of marriage: some before I left Mr. Ambery's family, but more since I have had a shop of my own. It always looks suspicious to me, now, when an elderly man begins to buy sugar-candy or gingerbread frequently; and so I am put upon my guard, and never taken by surprise, and hurried into saying yes, as many poor women are. The principal lawyer in the town was a bad, grasping man, that had been the ruin of scores upon scores of poor widows and orphans. To be his clerk was no recommendation, and Joshua Lamb, though he had a beautiful house, with a drawing-room ten times better furnished than Mr. Ambery's best parlour, and a carpet of fern-leaves and oak upon the floor fit for any lady in the town, was very attentive to me. It was the carpet, and two or three other little things about this house, that hindered me from giving Joshua a short answer, and sending him about his business; but though he had such a room of his own to sit down in like any gentleman, he seemed to like better my little quarried kitchen at the back of the shop; and many an evening he spent there, talking away glibly, but never throwing me off my guard, so as to get anything like a "yes" out of me, for the very thought that he was clerk to a bad lawyer made me keep my wits about me as much as if he had been a revolver, with a great number of barrels, ready to go off at any minute.

It was five years since I left my children. Katie was gone out as a governess; and Mr. Ambery had sunk further into an infirm old age, and left everything to Rebecca. She grew more saving than ever; and though she gave away a tenth of their income to charity and religion, because she believed it to be right to

do so, it was quite as a bargain with Providence that no losses through ill-health or misfortunes should come upon them. She would scarcely spend a farthing upon herself. She wore no flowers, or flounces, or ribbons, like other girls; yet with all that, and the fine faint lines upon her face—which nobody could see so well as I did, who knew her poor dear mother—she was by far the prettiest young lady that attended our chapel, when Katie was away.

The young minister—the second since Mr. Ambery resigned—took a fancy to Rebecca. It was edifying, even to me who knew her little faults, to see her at public worship, with her dark eyes downcast, and the beautiful long lashes lying over on her cheeks, as still and quiet as on a baby's sleeping face. The minister never caught her eye wandering, nor even lifted up to himself, until he read out his text, and then they fixed on him with a steady, serious gaze, as if he was some angel from heaven, who could have no earthly thoughts of love or anything of that sort.

Never had a young minister so much need of counsel from his elder pastor. I saw Mr. Craig rambling down our street most days, a studious-looking, thoughtful young man, the very man to win our Rebecca; and, as I watched him out of sight, I could often have cried with the earnest wish I had that all might go smoothly with them, and that they might get comfortably married before all the nature was worn out of them with the troubles of this weary world.

Early one morning, while I was mixing my dough for the breakfast-rolls, the shop-bell rang furiously, and who should rush through into my bakehouse but Rebecca, with nothing on her head save a shawl! We were used to run to and fro in that fashion after nightfall, but never in the daylight, with the eyes of the street upon us; and there she stood, gasping for breath, with her hand pressed against her bosom, and her large dark eyes looking larger and blacker from the ashy paleness of her face. My own heart beat at the sight of her till I could not speak, and we stood staring at one another in silence, as if the last day was come.

"Your father," I gasped out at last.

"He is asleep," she muttered with difficulty; "I haven't told him, nor Nellie."

"Katie!" I cried.

"No, no," she answered, "she is all right." And I leaned my head down upon my floury hands, and cried for very joy; for I had thought of nothing but that one of them was dead.

So I took Rebecca into my little kitchen, all trembling and shivering as she was, and set her down in my mother's arm-chair upon the hearth, keeping her hand pressed hard upon her heart to quiet its beating, till the colour began to come back into her face, and the sobs died away so that she could speak.

"Mary," she said, in a grand reasoning sort of way, as if she was setting me up for a judge, "you have known us all our lives. Have we ever been like other girls, flaunting, and idle, and extravagant? Have I not kept myself and my sisters aloof from all evil as carefully as my

mother would have done? I have given a tenth of all our income to the poor."

"My dear," I interrupted, for though I was proud of her and the other two, I did not like to hear her talk in that manner, "there are no young ladies equal to you in all the town. But what ever is the matter?"

"Listen," she said, and she read to me a lawyer's letter, with a great many whereases and notwithstanding in it; but the pith of it, as I could make it out, was, that the old scoundrel, Mr. Corbett, Joshua's master, gave notice to Mr. Ambery that he had the sum of eleven hundred pounds to pay on that day six months. Red as my face was from the heat of the oven, I felt it going as pale as Rebecca's own.

"My dear," I whispered, for it seemed too dreadful to speak aloud, "how is it? What is the meaning of it?"

"I hardly know," she said; "all I can understand is, that my father was made a trustee to a marriage settlement belonging to a cousin of Mr. Corbett's, more than thirty years ago; and this money was left in my father's hands, or Mr. Corbett is trying to make out that it was. Do you know, Mary, that the interest for five hundred pounds, at only four per cent, will come to six hundred. I have done that sum in my head already—oh! a hundred times. Eleven hundred pounds!"

We sat speechless some minutes after that, till Rebecca burst out again crying, and wringing her hands.

"Oh! I wish I was a man," she sobbed; "I wish I understood law and business! I know it is wrong! I know it is cheaterly! But what can we do against Mr. Corbett?"

"Why does he come upon us now, after all these years?" I asked.

"His cousin is just dead," she answered. "Mr. Corbett is executor of his will, and is winding up his affairs, I suppose. Eleven hundred pounds, Mary!"

There were no breakfast-rolls made that morning. I went down home with Rebecca; and she carried her father's breakfast up-stairs to bed as usual; and we waited as patiently as we could, till he was dressed, and had finished his own private prayers, which seemed longer than ever that day. But he came down stairs at length, looking so calm and tranquil, with his thin white hair brushed back from his kindly face, that the moment Rebecca saw him she ran and threw her arms round his neck, and leaning her head upon his breast, wept there as she had never done before.

We should have told Mr. Ambery at once, for Rebecca's strange conduct alarmed him, but his first thought, like mine, was that something had happened to Katie. There was a letter from the child to her eldest sister, left unopened on the table, for the lawyer's letter had caught Rebecca's eye first; but now she broke the seal, and read it out aloud in a dry hard voice—such a letter! for it had been written in a merry, yet timid, fluttering confidence, telling what the

young creature scarcely dared to confess to herself, that away from home and all of us, she had found none one whom she could love better than us all. And there stood Rebecca, reading it out before everybody, hardly knowing what the sense was; and just folding it up like a common letter when she had finished it.

"But listen to this, father," she said, tossing Katie's letter aside like a useless thing, and while the father was dwelling upon his child's words, Rebecca read the dreadful notice in a clear and distinct voice, as if it were a sermon. Mr. Ambery did not hearken at first; but, as she went on, he fixed his eyes upon her, and a look of vexation and anxiety settled on his face.

"My love," he said, almost peevishly, "I never touched that money in my life."

"Then what does all this mean?" asked Rebecca.

"I don't know what it means," he answered, in a helpless manner. "I do just remember Mary Corbett. Yes, she married Thompson, who went to college with me, but took to some business afterwards. I was trustee to her marriage-settlement, and John Ward was the other. If either of the trustees had the money in his hands, it was Ward, but he died years ago. They are all dead now."

"But, father," said Rebecca, who had a good head for business matters, "the money would be invested in some way, or paid into a bank, and you would get some receipt or acknowledgment for it. Just try to recollect."

"Ah!" he cried, after a few minutes' thought, "I remember Ward bringing me a document, which he said was a deed of release. But it is thirty years ago, and I must have put it into some place of safety. We must find it, and send it to Mr. Corbett."

The finding was easier to speak of than to do. Mr. Ambery had been writing sermons ever since he was twenty; and as if he had been one of those Turks I heard of at a missionary meeting who think it a sin to destroy a bit of paper, and I thought of the master the moment they were mentioned; he had kept every sermon and writing of his own, as though they were sacred, precious things. Also, he had kept every letter he had received. Ah! there were all the poor, dear, dead mistress's letters, for all the weary years they were waiting, tied up in packets for each twelve months; and Rebecca's white face, with the lines growing harder and plainer upon it, bent over them anxiously, as she unfolded one after another, to see if peradventure the costly document was among them. We were the more certain that the master had never made away with it, from the very numbers of the papers that were stored away in one place or another; even to a little closet under the eaves, so full that when the door was opened, the bundles of yellow sermons rolled out along the passage floor. But Rebecca sought perseveringly; and when she had searched in vain through every packet, she began again, though with a feeling of despair, and went through her wearisome task a second time, so sure were we

all that Mr. Ambery had put the deed in safety somewhere.

I did not tell Rebecca, but some ugly reports were being whispered about the town, and I wondered how the matter got abroad. Even the members of the church began to ask where the old minister's money came from, that thousand pounds lent out on two chapels, as many people knew. Had he inherited any property? Or had he had a legacy left him? Or had Mrs. Ambery brought him any fortune? Mr. Corbett came to service, morning and evening, with his smooth bland face, with its pleasant smile, like Satan turned into an angel of light; and his voice and manner overcame everybody, until even I shook hands with him in the chapel-yard, just because he held out his soft hand, with a pleasant look that robbed me of my senses, and he nodded to Joshua Lamb as if he had been his familiar friend. Just when the reports were at the worst, he threw himself into old Mr. Ambery's way as he came out of the porch, and taking off his hat with a look of the deepest reverence and affection, he grasped the hand of the poor, innocent victim, till all the congregation were greatly affected, and felt inclined to suspect their old pastor tenfold.

These rumours and scandals could not go on without it being necessary to bring them before the church. Mr. Craig warded off the blow for a long time; but the cry, which had not reached Rebecca and her father, was growing louder and louder, and it must be silenced or answered. I know that Mr. Craig held several private and irregular conferences with the leading members before he would call a church meeting to investigate the scandal about their aged pastor; but it had to come to that at last. He was closeted up with Mr. Ambery all one long morning, while Rebecca was finishing her second unsuccessful search; and when he came out of the study, he rushed through the lobby without heeding her as she stood within the sitting-room, and pulling the house-door after him with a great bang, he strode up the street, and passed my shop window, with a face ghastly pale.

We were sitting all together that night after evening prayer, and Mr. Ambery was smoking his pipe as peacefully as if there was neither sorrow nor care in the world, when Rebecca laid aside her mending—she always seemed to be mending rather than making—and she spoke in a hard, decisive manner, as though she had quite made up her mind how the present misfortune should be managed.

"Father," she said, "the deed of release is nowhere in the house. The claim is unjust and wicked, but Mr. Corbett has too much sense to make it if it is illegal, and it will swallow up the thousand pounds, which are the savings of your lifetime. I see only one way to escape out of our difficulty."

"My love," said her father, laying down his pipe, and folding his hands one over the other, as he looked into her anxious face, so like Mrs. Ambery's, "your poor mother and I denied ourselves all the joys and pleasures of youth to

gather this money together for you children. It was a great sacrifice, and I would not lose the fruit of it willingly. What am I to do?"

"The money is your own, father," she answered, "but you cannot keep it as yours. Give it to us children at once. Withdraw it from your investment, and make a gift of it in equal shares to us three. They could take it away from you, but not from us."

"And what will they do to me?" asked the old man.

"They may make you a bankrupt," she cried, rising and flinging her arms round his neck, "but we shall love you more, and all good people will not honour you less."

Mr. Ambery sat gazing thoughtfully into the fire, shaking his white head from time to time during his reflections. But I could not bear the idea of my master being made a bankrupt.

"Rebecca," said Mr. Ambery, "this morning Mr. Craig came hither to tell me that evil reports have arisen. They say that I have possessed myself of this money fraudulently, and already a church meeting is decided upon to investigate my conduct. My good name is more precious to me than gold or silver. What think you, my daughter? If I consent to do this thing which you propose, could I lift up my face before the congregation, or raise my voice in the church to deny this charge? Shall I say, 'My money is justly my own, but I cannot prove it so, and to save it from being wrested from me, whether I came by it honestly or dishonestly, I have given it over unto my children; let the accuser take what he can'? Rebecca, you shall decide this thing."

Not a word had Rebecca heard before either of the scandal or the church meeting, and as her father spoke of them, she stood before him as if turned into stone, with clenched hands, and lips half open, and forehead furrowed with deep, dreadful thoughts. It was terrible to her pride to think of her father bearing the name of bankrupt, but the blot of dishonesty was a thousand times harder, and she had to weigh pride and dishonour against the long growing of a love and care for money. All of us looking upon her knew that she was wrestling with temptation, and we held our breath, and turned away our eyes, whispering low down in our inmost spirits a prayer for her. There was a long, long silence, while we neither moved nor sighed, and there was no sound but the crackling of the embers in the grate, as they wasted away in the consuming flame.

"Father," cried Rebecca, throwing herself on her knees beside him, "I've loved this money; oh! I've loved it more than I knew myself. Every one of those thousand pounds, every shilling that has come to us as interest, has been very dear to me; not altogether from covetousness, dear father—a little of that, perhaps—but it has all seemed to prove your care for us, yours and my mother's. You laid it up for us, saving it from your own youth to make ours easier, and must the thief break through and steal the treasure? Well, let it go. Anything

to keep your good name free. I will love no money again."

I never saw the young creature, who had grown old before her time, look so radiant and youthful as she knelt there, smiling bravely into her father's face. Mr. Craig would have given something for that vision, I guess. We drew a long breath of relief and gladness, and spoke no more of the trouble that night.

The very next day Joshua Lamb came in to buy a cheese-cake or two after his dinner, and as I had my own purpose to serve (no doubt he, being a lawyer's clerk, had his also), I invited him to step into my kitchen, and made myself agreeable to him. A man, even if he is a lawyer's clerk, is sometimes outwitted by a woman, and by-and-by my gentleman began talking in a very low and confidential tone, leaning over the small round table between us, till I almost drew back from him, only I was too wary for that.

The day the church meeting was to be held, Katie came home for the Michaelmas holidays. We had told her nothing, and I suppose little notice had been taken of her confidential letter to Rebecca, for when we were alone together (she and I), she pouted, and blushed up to the roots of her hair, and then hid her face upon my shoulder.

"You will care about it," she murmured, "though Rebecca doesn't, because she intends to be an old maid herself. Oh, he is such a darling! And you're not to suppose you are going to step over my head, if you do go and marry Joshua Lamb, and have that lovely carpet of fern-leaves. I'll be higher than you yet. If you marry the clerk, I'll marry the master!"

"My dear," I cried, thinking of that awful scoundrel, Mr. Corbett, "don't make a jest of such a dreadful thing."

"But I will make a jest of it," she said, "and it isn't dreadful to be married, you best of old maids. We'll work Joshua just as hard whether you marry him or not, and Harry shall have fine times with doing nothing but mind me. Why, Mary, aren't you glad for me to settle down at home amongst you all?"

"But who is Harry?" I asked.

"The nephew of Mr. Corbett, the great rich lawyer here," she answered. "He is to become his partner now he has finished his law studies, and we are to be quite grand, you know. Why, Harry's father died a little time ago, and left him I don't know how much money."

I felt sick at heart to hear Katie rattle on about Harry Thompson and his uncle; but I could not gather up strength to tell her about the trouble at home, just then in the first glee of coming back to us. So, in the evening, we only told her there was going to be a church meeting, and as I had been a member of the church for some years, to be an example to my children, I went down to walk with Mr. Ambery and Rebecca to the chapel.

Of course Mr. Corbett could not be present, but many a one was there who had been won

over to his side by his gloss and blandishments, and by the sly dark scandal against Mr. Ambery. Rebecca and I took our seats quite at the back of the chapel, and my poor child covered her face with a thick veil. But the master went and took his customary place among the deacons, with the young minister presiding over them, just underneath the pulpit, from which he had taught and comforted the church for upwards of thirty years. The very sight of his white head, tremulous and bowed down with age, and not with dishonour, ought to have stricken them into shame, and I did see several, who were getting on in life themselves, hide their faces for a minute or two in their hands, as if they were saying a second prayer on his behalf alone.

There was a long stifling hush after all the usual work was over, so dreadful that all our hearts throbbed and fluttered painfully, while we gazed with fixed eyes upon our young minister. You could see him shiver; you could catch the light falling upon big tears which forced their way through the fingers of his hand covering his eyes; you could almost hear the muttered words that rose to his lips, and were choked back again to his heart by his sobs. Every one of us, except Rebecca, gazed upon him awe-stricken, and a sigh, that sounded like a sorrowful wailing, rolled round the chapel, as he stretched out his trembling hand towards the old pastor.

"Brethren," he cried, "I cannot! I cannot! You ask me to sit in judgment upon a father. God knows I have looked upon Mr. Ambery as a most revered father. Choose one from among yourselves to take this place."

He left it as he spoke, and, stepping down into the aisle, took the seat in the minister's pew, where, in past years, Mrs. Ambery had listened to her husband's teaching. There was a stirring and rustling of the motionless figure beside me, and I saw Rebecca glance once at the minister's averted face. The deacons looked at one another in confusion and bewilderment, not knowing how to choose, and there ran a whispering from pew to pew; but, before any person had found courage to speak, Mr. Ambery rose from his seat, and, with tottering steps, moved to the minister's chair, and, standing for a moment to look round with a faint glimmer of a smile, sank down into it, leaning his silvery head against the purple cloth with which it was covered. He had always taken the vacant chair whenever our minister was absent; but could he sit in judgment upon himself? I kept my eyes fixed upon him, but his face was as tranquil and bright as was Stephen's in his hour of false accusation; and, while yet the church hesitated, he lifted up his voice, clear though feeble, and said, "Brethren, proceed with the matter in hand. Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" One of the deacons, I mention no names, stated that thirty years ago, when the sum in question must

have passed into Mr. Ambery's hands, it was found that he had invested five hundred pounds in a mortgage upon a chapel, which he proved by a letter from one of the trustees of that chapel. Up to that time he had received from the church only the sum of eight hundred pounds, being one hundred pounds a year for eight years, during which he had been their pastor. Was it to be credited by men of business that out of eight hundred pounds the immense proportion of five hundred pounds had been saved?

Mr. Ambery listened attentively, but with a strange sad air of perplexity upon his face; and when the speaker came to a pause he answered nothing, but glanced round uneasily as if for some one else to speak. After a dreadful pause, he rose and drew himself up to his full height, stretching out his arms towards them with a look of tender entreaty, while his voice, thin and quivering, fell upon our hearkening ears.

"My people," he said, "it is I who have baptised you; these hands have broken the bread of communion among you; night and day have I borne the burden of your souls before the throne."

He paused there tremulously, and a profound stillness and shame fell upon the church.

"You ask me how I saved that money," he cried. "I tell you I denied myself everything that is desirable and pleasant to a man. I gave hunger, and famine, and loneliness, and labour for it. Catherine herself trod upon the verge of starvation to snatch it from the poverty which threatened us. I tell you men like you know not what self-denial is. We paid our full price of suffering for every portion of it. Behold now, here I am, old and grey-headed before you: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whom have I defrauded? or whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you."

He stood before us with his hand upraised, and his eyes flashing back our earnest gaze; but before one could move the fire faded away from his face, and with a low bitter cry, which tingled in our ears, he sank down upon the floor, as one suddenly stricken by the hand of God.

Yes, stricken, but with a very gentle stroke: paralysed down one side, yet with his mind and his speech spared to him, or rather restored after a few days' lethargy. There was nothing marvellous about it after the great excitement and emotion of the troublous days; but there were some who, when the first shock was over, were not afraid to say there was a judgment in it. There was no other church meeting held, though nothing had been decided at the first; and still every one was reckoning and calculating whether the money could have been honestly gathered, or was, as Mr. Corbett's friends asserted, this very sum for which Mr. Ambery was trustee. And there was a great division of opinion in the church about it.

Of course, we were compelled to tell Katie all; and never did a more woful change pass over any young creature. She had come home to us a rosy, merry, sunny girl, such as it delighted my eyes to see, after bearing the burden of Rebecca's carefulness and anxiety; but, in that single day Katie grew blanched and sorrow-worn, as if the iron entered into her soul. No delay or dallying she allowed herself, but wrote at once to Harry Thompson, bidding him to find out the treachery practised upon her father, or to see her face no more; and then she closed her lips in utter silence about him, and going about the house the two or three days she was with us with downcast head and sunless face, it almost broke my heart to watch her.

There was nothing that I could not do for my children. It is no light thing for a woman of forty to think of marriage; but I sat down and mused upon all the troubles of my old master's family, and upon Joshua Lamb's house, and carpet, and furniture, until I reached out the writing-desk my children had given me, and wrote a note on a sheet of gilt-edged paper, inviting Joshua to come to supper that evening. I never saw a man relish anything more than he did the brace of partridges which I set before him, well cooked by myself, for he had miserable sort of cookery at home, in spite of his drawing-room; and when he was satisfied he leaned back in the arm-chair, and regarded me with a very earnest and grave countenance.

"Mary," said he, with a deep sigh, "how long are you going to make me uncomfortable?"

"Why, Mr. Lamb," I answered, innocently, "I'm sure I'm making you as comfortable as I can."

"Nay, Mary," he said, "you understand me well enough. Will you become my wife?"

He had never spoken so plain before; and though that was just what I was wanting to bring him to, there went a dither all through me as he spoke the words.

"Joshua," I said, after a while, "I'll make a bargain with you, and a promise. If you'll find out this roguery of Mr. Corbett's about old Mr. Ambery's thousand pounds, so as he shall not lose it, I'll be married to you as soon as ever you choose to ask me afterwards."

It is a dreadful thing to be under a solemn promise of marriage. I cried myself to sleep like a girl of eighteen that night; and after that I could hardly bear to see Joshua go past my shop-window, with a knowing smirk upon his cunning lawyer's face. Mr. Craig, also, used to go down the street as regularly as the day came, to pay a visit to poor old Mr. Ambery; but Rebecca avoided meeting him, and he never sought an opportunity to speak to her. I suppose he thought it was no time to talk of love just then.

If Harry Thompson and Joshua Lamb made any efforts to discover the roguery of Mr. Corbett, they both failed. Only, they said, only six years' instead of thirty years' interest could be claimed. This was some comfort.

Till the very last day I expected that the deed might be found, or Mr. Corbett's heart be changed; but nothing happened. I do not know whether the old villain could have got the money with all his craftiness; but Mr. Ambery would not go to law about it, while he had no deed to show, and all those suspicions were raised against his integrity. Rebecca wrote to Mr. Corbett, requesting him to come and receive the money in her father's presence; Mr. Craig and the long-headed deacon were asked to be present likewise; and Rebecca insisted upon me staying with her in the old minister's sick-room.

Mr. Corbett entered the chamber with the air of an apostle, ready to give every one of us his blessing. The long-headed deacon shook hands with him heartily; and I suppose Mr. Craig felt it to be his duty to submit to take his offered hand. But when he turned to old Mr. Ambery, who lay propped up on pillows, his thin, trembling fingers grasping a roll of bank-notes which fluttered in his hold, the tears ran down his white and furrowed cheeks. Rebecca stepped forward, and placed herself between him and the smiling villain.

"Be quick," she said, with a flash of the lightning in her eyes; "finish your iniquitous work, and go your way. But take you this word from me, The Lord God of recompenses, He will requite."

He shrank back, and muttered some words we could not catch; and Rebecca, taking the bank-notes from her father's feeble hand, counted them out one by one before him, the look of scorn gathering more and more upon her face, like the thick thunder-cloud. When that was ended, and the deed of release given in due form, she crossed the room without another word, and, throwing wide the door, beckoned to them to depart at once, and in silence. Even Mr. Craig withdrew, after casting one beseeching look at the white-faced, haughty woman, who closed the door with a snap, as if it would never be opened to any one of them again. I also went home, and wrote a letter upon black-edged paper to Joshua Lamb, bidding him never to think of such a thing as crossing my door-step any more.

Whatever the church thought concerning the matter, it did not withhold the pension of forty pounds a year to its old minister. Rebecca set herself, with more courage and less anxious care than of old, to make the diminished income suffice for herself and her bedridden father. She sent Nellie out into a situation like Katie's; and then began a long, dreary, lonely, laborious life, with only herself and the poor old master in the house. Mr. Craig continued constant in his visits, and at times won a little softening regard from Rebecca, which kept him on the verge of hope, just balanced between that and despair. But we found out long afterwards that Katie could not help relenting towards Harry Thompson; and they were carrying on a correspondence of heart-breaking letters about their circumstances, which comforted and cheered

them very much. As for Joshua, he would as soon have dared to venture into a lion's den, as to enter into my shop either for sugar-candy or cheese-cakes.

Many a person would say it was my fancy; but ever after that day, when he took the minister's money, Mr. Corbett shrank, and paled, and dwindled away before my eyes, until whenever he went down the street, with the woful shadow behind him smiting upon its breast, each time I saw the life slowly dying out of him; like the light goes out of the sky on a summer's evening. I noticed him muffling up more and more, and walking with feeble tread; and then there came a faint, hollow cough, which sometimes made him press his hand against his side. People counted to one another how many of his relations had died consumptive, and said how foolish it was of Harry Thompson to stand off from entering into partnership with him; and they reckoned up what riches he would have to leave behind him, poor, foolish wretch! Spite of all my wrath against him, I could not help but sigh, and shiver with a kind of awe, as from time to time he tottered past, looking more and more woe-begone, with the very look of anguish, which his shadow wore, settling now upon his own bland features.

It was getting on for twelve months after Rebecca and her father had paid away their treasured savings, when one day, in the dusk of the evening, Joshua Lamb tapped meekly upon my counter; but, before I could open my lips to order him off my premises, he began to speak glibly but humbly enough, not giving me room to put in one word, until he had told me that his miserable master was getting worse and worse, and wanted to see Rebecca.

I may as well be straightforward, if Joshua Lamb and Mr. Corbett were not. After some hanging back, she consented; but would not go without me. We were shown into Corbett's lonely parlour, where he sat amidst the gloom of crimson curtains, which cast a kind of rosy glow upon his white face. They could not conceal the wasted cheeks and sunken eyes, nor the glance of mingled despair, and shame, and agony, with which he met Rebecca's steadfast gaze. He was a man in years, getting on for sixty; but, till now, I had never thought of him with any more fellow-feeling or pity than I should have thought of the devil, God forgive me! Yet, as he sat there in his wealthy room, fading away from all his riches, alone and desolate, I could hardly refrain from going up to him, and shaking out the pillow under his grey head, and laying it down softly and gently for his wicked brain to rest upon.

"Thank you, Mary," he said, smiling; for he was that cunning yet that he could read one's very thoughts; "thank you, but never mind. Sit down, you and Miss Ambery; you would rather not shake hands with me. I am troubled about the old minister; he is an aged man, and he thinks he has something against me. Miss Ambery, I should die easier, and I know I am

dying, if you would receive that money back again from me as a gift."

Rebecca did not answer for a minute or two; while Mr. Corbett drew out a large pocket-book, and took from it several notes for a hundred pounds each, counting them aloud one by one. I knew how poor we were, and I felt dazed and giddy for very joy.

"No," said Rebecca, "I will not take them; they are the price of my father's good name. I will accept no gift from you, Mr. Corbett."

A spasm shot across his face, and he laid his worn hand upon his heaving chest, as if to strengthen him to speak again.

"Rebecca," he said, "I have known you since you were a little child, and I cannot bear for you, and Katie, and Nellie to come to want. I would rather give you the money than leave it in my will. Take more money. Take a thousand pounds apiece if you will have it. Take it, and I will consent for Harry to marry Katie." Rebecca stood up in her place calm and resolute, though her eyes were fastened upon the rustling bank-notes in Mr. Corbett's hand; while he watched her face eagerly, as if his soul's salvation rested upon her answer. She smiled at length, half in scorn, and half in triumph.

"It is a great bribe," she said, "and I loved money once, but it has no power over me now. Give me back my father's good name, and I will listen to you; but, till then, you may go on to offer me your worthless money, and I will say no to the last."

"Rebecca," he cried, looking affrighted at her, "give me your solemn promise that you will not betray me, and I will tell you."

"I will hear nothing that I cannot make known," she answered. "What you have to tell you shall write down, that it may be made known to the world after your death. So far I consent. Only let my father's name be righted, and I care very little about the money. May God have pity upon you, Mr. Corbett!"

He was too feeble to answer her anything; and I ran and made the pillows soft and easy under his head, before we turned to go away. Even Rebecca stepped up to his side, and took his languid hand for a moment in her own.

"Stay," he cried, gasping for breath, and he closed his fingers over hers, though he had not the strength of a baby, "you shall write it for me; only keep my secret till I am gone."

So Rebecca sat down at the table beside him, neither trembling nor faltering, and waited with her steadfast piercing eyes resting upon him, until he recovered himself; and receiving our solemn promises to keep his secret, he bade her what she should write upon the paper. It was to this effect: When Mr. Ambery resigned his office of pastor to the church, the trust-deeds, with other law papers belonging to the chapel, had been given over to Mr. Corbett's care, and that among them he discovered the lost deed of release, which the minister had kept with them, though belonging to his own private affairs. Furthermore, that when Mr. Thompson died, who was the last person then living that could bear

testimony for Mr. Ambery, he had been tempted of Satan to claim the moneys from him. The wretched man spoke clearly, and Rebecca wrote it down with a firm hand. Whereupon he rang and ordered Joshua Lamb to his presence, and without reading the paper to him he signed it, and bade him put his name to it as a witness. After which, with the precious paper in our own possession, we returned home rejoicing.

Mr. Corbett lingered nearly a month from that day, during which time I saw him often, for though we were in different stations, we were townspeople, and I had known him all my life; and I could not bear to think of him passing away with nobody but hirelings to smooth his dying pillow. Several messages I carried to him, full of kindness and gospel comfort, from the old minister, all ignorant as he was of the restitution the miserable man had made. He died at last without much feeling, either of body or mind, as most people do, whether they be saints or sinners; and the following Monday, being the ordinary monthly church meeting, Rebecca sent that paper to Mr. Craig for him to read before the assembly of the church.

She and I had never been to a church meeting since the charge was brought against Mr. Ambery; nor did we go to that. We were sitting together in Mr. Ambery's chamber, Rebecca near the window, looking up to the evening sky so peacefully, that there was no line of grief or care upon her face, when through the quiet house there rang a loud and earnest peal, which caused us all to start with affright, and I ran down stairs hastily to open the front door. There in the street stood the assembled church, with Mr. Craig at their head, and all the deacons pressing close after him, eager to follow him in. Mr. Craig put me gently on one side, and marched straight on with his company up into the minister's long deserted and desolate chamber. There was little need of speech. The weeping church, tongue-tied with shame and sorrow, yet smiling amid its tears, crowded round the old pastor's bed, begging pardon in sobs and choking words; until the long-headed deacon called upon Mr. Craig to be their spokesman. He went forward before them all, and standing for a minute or two speechless beside Mr. Ambery, while everybody was looking to him to confess their sorrow, he could do nothing else but stoop down, and press his lips reverently and tenderly upon the old man's wrinkled forehead.

I saw that when he lifted up his head his eyes met Rebecca's, and a glow and a flush, strange to both those grave faces, flashed across them for a moment. He lingered till all the church had departed, even to the deacons; and the last sound of footsteps had died out of the house. But as Rebecca, shrinking and nervous, was creeping away stealthily from his presence,

he placed himself in her way, and took both her hands in his.

"Rebecca," he said, speaking before her father and me, "do you love me?"

"Yes," she answered, hanging down her head.

"I am a poor man," he said, "and we may have to wait long."

"We will wait," she whispered, as Catherine her mother might have done many years to this aged, bedridden man, who then stood before her as her lover. Mr. Craig laid his lips upon hers, with as much reverence and tenderness, but with more passion, maybe, as when he had kissed her father beforehand; but I, knowing the mother's sorrowful, shortened life of toil and care, turned aside heart-sore for the two young creatures before me.

But their lot in life was to be easier than Mr. Ambery's and Catherine's. When Mr. Corbett's will was opened, though it made no mention of the paper which owned to one of his crimes of dishonesty and oppression, it contained a codicil, which left a thousand pounds apiece to the minister's three daughters, and it revoked the condition that Harry Thompson should inherit his wealth only if he gave up his marriage with Katie.

Before many months were past, Rebecca became the young minister's wife; and Katie only waited for a year or two more of discretion. Joshua Lamb professes to charge me with breaking my word, but my bargain with him was plainly enough that he himself should find out the trickery about the deed of release. At times I feel a little heart-sinking, lest he should bring an action against me for breach of promise of marriage; but he has nothing to show save those two little notes I wrote to him; and I feel there would be very little hope of happiness in marriage, if I had to be upon my guard all my life long.

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